Adriënne Heijnen

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF DREAMS

A Thousand Years of Negotiated Meanings in Iceland

LIT

Adriënne Heijnen

The Social Life of Dreams

European Studies in Culture and Policy

edited by

Prof. Máiréad Nic Craith
and
Prof. Ullrich Kockel
(Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh)

Volume 12

LIT

Adriënne Heijnen

The Social Life of Dreams

A Thousand Years of Negotiated Meanings in Iceland

LIT

Cover picture: Dick Pieters, *Slaapster* (Sleeping woman), 2003
14 × 16 cm, olieverf op paneel (oil on panel)
Courtesy of Galerie Mokum, Amsterdam and Dick Pieters

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.

ISBN 978-3-643-90238-2

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

©LIT VERLAG GmbH & Co. KG Wien,
Zweigniederlassung Zürich 2013
Klosbachstr. 107
CH-8032 Zürich
Tel. +41 (0) 44-251 75 05
Fax +41 (0) 44-251 75 06
E-Mail: zuerich@lit-verlag.ch
http://www.lit-verlag.ch

LIT VERLAG Dr. W. Hopf
Berlin 2013
Fresnostr. 2
D-48159 Münster
Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-62 03 20
Fax +49 (0) 2 51-23 19 72
E-Mail: lit@lit-verlag.de
http://www.lit-verlag.de

Distribution:
In Germany: LIT Verlag Fresnostr. 2, D-48159 Münster
Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-620 32 22, Fax +49 (0) 2 51-922 60 99, E-mail: vertrieb@lit-verlag.de
In Austria: Medienlogistik Pichler-ÖBZ, e-mail: mlo@medien-logistik.at
In the UK: Global Book Marketing, e-mail: mo@centralbooks.com
In North America: International Specialized Book Services, e-mail: orders@isbs.com
e-books are available at www.litwebshop.de

To the people of Iceland

Contents

Illustrations **9**

Preface **11**

Acknowledgements **11**

Practical remarks **15**
Icelandic terminology 15

Introduction **17**
The social life of dreams: the argument 17
Iceland 24
Pursuing ethnography 28
Chapter overview 38

Chapter 1 Anthropological Approaches to Dreaming **43**
Introduction 43
An evolutionary perspective 45
Sigmund Freud 46
Dissolving the boundaries between anthropology and psychology 48
Dream narration, performance, and power 50
Dream sharing and cosmology 52

Chapter 2 A Thousand Years of Dreaming in Iceland **57**
Introduction 57
From oral poetry to written text: from the 10th to the 15th century 59
From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century 74
The nineteenth and twentieth centuries 83
Concluding remarks 86

Chapter 3 Animal Images **89**
Introduction 89
Fylgjur in Old Norse literature 90
Fylgjur in modern and contemporary material 106
Changes in the conceptualisation of fylgja 111
Animal images in modern and contemporary dream accounts 117
Concluding remarks 128

Chapter 4 Humans and Half-humans: *Huldufólk* **135**
Introduction 135
The "folk tale period": huldufólk and humans, others and the self 138
The contemporary period. Huldufólk between nature and culture 151
Huldufólk, from invisibility to visibility 155
Concluding remarks 160

Chapter 5 The Living and the Dead 165
Introduction 165
The living dead 166
The caring dead 171
The caring living 177
Að vitja nafns: seeking a namesake 182
Naming by the living 186
Að vitja nafns: strategy and cosmology 190

Chapter 6 Amongst the Living: The Dreamer and the Other 201
Introduction 201
Dreaming, the self and the other in Iceland 204
Conclusion 211

Chapter 7 The Messiness of Dream Theories and Cosmologies 213
Introduction 213
The farmer and the telepathic nature of dreaming 214
The dead on the move 220
The pastor: "This world where we live" 223
The spiritualist movement 225
The 'messiness' of religious beliefs and practices 229
Contemporary religion 231
The computer scientist and the large sample 237
The dream scientist 247
Dream theories and cosmologies 253
Icelandic cosmologies and Barth's three facets of knowledge 259

Bibliography 265
Old Icelandic literature 282
Sources fifteenth – nineteenth century 284
Collections of folktales 284
Abbreviations 285
Other references 285

Index 286

Illustrations

Figure 1.Map of Iceland. Published with kind permission of the National Land Survey of Iceland 25
Figure 2. Packing tomatoes in Flúðir. Photo: Sigurður Sigmundsson, reproduced with his kind permission 33
Figure 3. The Fjallkona of the dreamer and the Fjallkona as a late nineteenth century national symbol. Artist: Helgi Magnússon, based on a description by Eiríkur Magnússon and a sketch by J. Zwecker. Part of the Collection of the National Gallery of Iceland. 38
Figure 4. Örn er örlög (The eagle is fate), painting made by the dreamer 107
Figure 5. Model of spatial classification (presence and movement) of animals that are meaning-bearing elements in dream accounts 120
Figure 6. The meaning of colours, livestock and dried fish in Icelandic dream interpretation 124
Figure 7. Dráttar- and reiðhestur. Krísuv. Mar. Á heimleið eftir fuglaveiði í Krísuvíkurbjargi (on the way home after bird hunt), 1941. Photo: Á. L. J. Reproduced with kind permission of the local archive in Selfoss. 128
Figure 8. Huldufólk and humans: each other's neighbours. A knoll near the farm Túnsberg in Hrunamannahreppur to which stories on huldufólk are related. Photo: the author. 153
Figure 9. The Álagablettur here discussed. Photo: the author 153
Figure 10. Naming practice among three generations in nineteenth century Iceland 189
Figure 11. Example of naming in contemporary Iceland 192
Figure 12. The churches Hrunakirkja (to the left) and Hrepphólakirkja in Hrunamanna-hreppur. The photo of Hrunakirkja is taken from Nálaraugað (The Eye of the Needle), a place where unmarried women could lay themselves down to sleep in order to dream about their coming husband. Photos: the author. 223

Preface

This book addresses the ways in which dreams have been, and are, used as vehicles for thought and action in past and present-day Iceland. Ethnographically, it describes the ways Icelanders have used the revelatory power which they ascribe to dreams, over a period of almost a thousand years. Theoretically, the book seeks to recast dreams as a part of everyday social life, stressing their epistemological and social value.

Curiously enough, before I embarked on this undertaking, dreams had never been a great interest of mine. I was born and raised in the Netherlands, and did not belong to the small group of Dutch people who engage in dream interpretation as a means of developing the spiritual side of the self. I was, rather, among those who ponder the dreaming experience very little. On moving to Reykjavík in 1996, to embark on the study of Icelandic language and literature at the University of Iceland, I became intrigued by the conversations on dreams that took place among Icelanders during coffee breaks, in their leisure time, and at the breakfast table. In Iceland, dreams seemed not to be born to be forgotten, but--at least some dreams--were considered worth remembering, to recount and to contemplate with the help of others. Most striking, perhaps, was the idea that dreaming was not just considered a way of processing experiences or reflections of previous days, but might disclose hidden knowledge inaccessible to the waking mind, and thus provide information about the past, the present, and the future. Throughout my research, which has spanned a period of fourteen years, I became aware that dreaming is not necessarily an isolated nighttime activity, only meaningful to the dreamer him- or herself. Rather, by listening to Icelanders recounting their dreams, I learned to see how dreams are integrated into social life, and how important they are for people to adapt to, and create, change, for giving meaning to life and for becoming human among other humans.

Acknowledgements

I am greatly indebted to the many people who have helped open my eyes to this fascinating topic, shared their knowledge and insights with me, and given me practical assistance. Paula Vermeyden, former teacher of Modern Icelandic at the University of Amsterdam, very competently taught me the Icelandic language and, above all, a love and passion for Iceland. Sadly, she died in 2005. Her ashes were scattered over the region of Iceland that was so dear to her. Maria Helena Sarabia, who has the wonderful ability of getting the best out of people, successfully taught me in just one evening how to pass my oral examinations in Icelandic at the University of Iceland, without my having spoken much Icelandic before. Thanks to her, I was able to skip the first year, and enter the second year of "Icelandic for Foreigners" at the University of Iceland, which provided me with the language skills so necessary for my anthropological re-

search. She and her husband, Gunnlaugur Karlsson, helped me in various ways during my many stays in Iceland.

Sturla Einarsson has followed my book, from the first sentence to its conclusion. He pointed out to me that Icelandic dream sharing is a relevant and extremely interesting topic of research. His main contribution, however, has been his challenge to me to look beyond the obvious, encouraging me to see the complexity of dream sharing in Iceland. Þórunn Edda Sigurjónsdóttir, Leifur Magnússon, Jónína Einarsdóttir, Geir Gunnlaugsson, Anna Rósa Robertsdóttir, Tómas Ponzi, Gísli Leifsson, Else Williamsson, Gro Tove Sandsmark, Eyvindur P. Eiríksson and Guðlaug Björnsdóttir have offered me great hospitality during my many field trips to Reykjavík. In recent years, Guðlaug's apartment has become my second home. In addition, she offered her assistance in correcting the Icelandic in this book. Also Maríanna Traustadóttir corrected my Icelandic in other contexts and supported me in many practical matters.

In the Icelandic countryside, in Hrunamannahreppur (South Iceland), Helga Karlsdóttir offered me a job and an apartment. Her efforts to put me in contact with the inhabitants of Hrunamannahreppur, and all the dreams she shared with me have been indispensable. Lára Þorsdóttir helped me greatly during my second field trip to Hrunamannahreppur, by offering me a room in her house. She, Skúli Guðmundsson, her husband, their daughters, and Skúli's parents, Ásthildur Sigurðardóttir and Guðmundur Ingimarsson, welcomed me with great hospitality.

I am indebted to the institutions and foundations that provided the ever-so-necessary scientific, practical, and financial assistance for my research. I am grateful for the help and inspiring discussions with friends and colleagues at the University of Iceland, the Árni Magnússon Institute, The Reykjavík Academy, and Stefansson Arctic Institute. I particularly wish to thank Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir, the late Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson, and Terry Gunnell. My thanks go to the staff at the National Museum of Iceland for their assistance during my study of their ethnological collections. I am also grateful to the people at the local archive in Selfoss, who assisted me in finding sources of information about the area, and provided me with illustrations, photographs, and documents on the daily life and history of South Iceland.

My colleagues and friends at the Department of Anthropology, Archaeology and Linguistics of the University of Aarhus, where I was based while writing my book, have been very important to me. I am especially grateful for the support and friendship of Mads Holst, who has always been willing to discuss ideas and read my work. Also, the support of Torben Vestergaard and Bart Westgeest has been without limits.

Outside Denmark and Iceland, I have benefited greatly from discussions with many colleagues (too many to mention here), who are engaged in research on dreams and related topics. I will specifically mention Édouard Conte, who has patiently read large parts of this book in draft form, and provided me with his valuable comments and insights. He, as well as Piers Vitebsky and Anna

Tsing, have greatly encouraged me in my research and writings. I also gratefully acknowledge the anonymous reviewers of my book manuscript whose constructive comments have been extremely useful and Tina Huey and Michaela Sciosca who have corrected the English.

In the Netherlands, I warmly thank my parents and my sister and her family, and home in Denmark, my partner Brian Refstrup Pedersen and my stepdaughters Silke and Lærke for their precious support. Our daughter Merle has been my greatest motivation to complete this book.

The Icelandic Ministry of Education granted me a scholarship to study the Icelandic language at the University of Iceland during 1996 and 1997. My language studies offered me a solid basis for pursuing anthropological research on Icelandic society. The University of Aarhus' Research Foundation and the Danish Rector's Conference offered financial support during the initial stages of my research. The Árni Magnússon Institute financed my stay at their institute in 1999. I am grateful to the Icelandic Research Council (RANNÍS), which financed the main part of my research. Foundation Idella, the Danish-Icelandic Foundation, and Andreassen & Hougaards Almene Fond have provided me with travel grants to conduct fieldwork. The Danish Research School of Anthropology and Ethnography supplied me with a grant for writing parts of my book, while Aarhus University, the Aarhus University Research Foundation and, again, the Danish-Icelandic Foundation, granted financial support for the completion of the manuscript.

This book would have never appeared without the many Icelanders who welcomed me with great hospitality and who were willing to share their dreams, experiences, and lives with me, during the many years that I have been living on and off in Iceland. This book is my tribute to them.

Practical remarks

Icelandic terminology

As the reader will soon notice, I use many Icelandic terms throughout the book. The Icelandic language regarding dreaming and dream interpretation is rich, compared to the English language, and the use of Icelandic concepts is therefore unavoidable. The use of only an English translation of these terms could easily lead to a misunderstanding of their meaning. To avoid confusion, I use Icelandic nouns, adjectives, names of persons and places in the nominative case; the Icelandic language recognises four singular cases, and four plural, and nouns have three grammatical genders.

Translations and ethics

When quotations were translated by my hand, I have added the abbreviation "m.t.", indicating "my translation". I have chosen to follow the oral language of the Icelandic quotations in my English translations, as the narrative structure is significant in the sharing of dreams. This may result in inconsistencies in meaning, grammar, and time in the English translations.

In keeping with the ethical guidelines of the Ethnological Department of the National Museum of Iceland, I have chosen to not display original Icelandic textual material, with the exception of poems and verses. These guidelines ask that the Icelandic texts written by participants not be quoted verbatim, mainly because of grammar and spelling mistakes that are often found in the texts. I have chosen to be consistent, and not display the Icelandic quotations from the interviews I carried out, but only my English translations, with a few exceptions, in which I focus on the narrative structure of the text. However, all interviews were conducted in Icelandic.

Information people gain through dreaming can be highly sensitive and sometimes disturbing. Only when people have given me permission to do so, have I disclosed their identities. In other situation, I have chosen to remove or change names. In those cases where I discuss extensively the experiences and dreams of specific persons, I have shown my written texts to these persons for them to approve and comment on. This proved to be extremely rewarding for both parties and was often followed by engaged discussions and the sharing of other dreams.

Introduction

The social life of dreams: the argument

On the last weekend of April 2002, the Icelandic lottery sent to all Icelandic households a small booklet with the title *Draumabókin. Heillaráð til að dreyma vinningzzztölur í Lottó* ("The dream booklet. Complete advice to dreaming winning numbers in the Lottery").[1] This was occasioned by the lottery "pot" containing eight times the usual amount: Eight million Icelandic krónur could be won. Even one of my Icelandic friends who never plays the lottery, but who had sent me the booklet, went to the nearest shop to get information on how to participate in the game. The booklet encourages people to buy lottery tickets by giving advice on how to increase their chances:

> We all put our trust in some kind of conduct, in order to choose winning numbers for our lottery tickets. One kind of conduct that, over time, has led to very good results for many lucky lottery players, is to pay attention to the numbers about which they dream. As is generally known, the condition for a winning dream is a good night's sleep.[2] (m.t.)

The booklet humorously explains how to obtain a good night's sleep, in order to dream of winning numbers. However, people are advised to not despair, should numbers not appear in their dreams. Dreaming of symbols such as a sunbronzed man, fruit, dancing to violin music, stamps, the name Halldór, faeces, wild animals, trawlers, and picking berries are identified as indications that, no matter which numbers you select, there is the chance to win eight million krónur. Winning the lottery by selecting numbers for a lottery ticket on the basis of a dream is just one theme of the dream accounts of which Icelanders told me, during my many stays in Iceland, between 1996 and 2010.

My interest in Icelandic dream accounts was triggered by curiosity. While living in Reykjavík, I observed that dreams were a common subject of daily conversation. Unaccustomed to discussing dreams in the Dutch social environment, where I grew up, I wondered why many Icelanders interpreted the activity of dreaming as providing knowledge about past, present, and future events in waking life. I noticed that the narration of dreams is not just a contemporary phenomenon in Iceland. The above-mentioned booklet from the national lottery should be seen in the context of a tradition of recounting and interpreting dreams which can be traced throughout Iceland's rich literary tradition. Dream accounts already appear in the very first manuscripts written in the Icelandic

1 Lottó Nonni and Manni /Ydda. NM06106/sia.is

2 See note 1.

language, dating from the twelfth century.[3] While much has changed, the available written sources indicate that for almost a thousand years, the activity of dreaming has been regarded as having the potential to reveal the courses of the lives of individuals, and to engage with the world surrounding the dreamer, rather than involving a withdrawal into the self.

Although various other theories of dreaming are present in contemporary Icelandic society (psychological, cognitive, post-modern, etc.), there are no indications that the view of dreaming as having revelatory power will change significantly in the near future. In the 1970s, the psychologist Erlendur Haraldsson carried out a survey in Iceland, of beliefs in transcendental phenomena. The survey showed that thirty-six percent of the 846 Icelanders who participated in the survey confirmed having dreamt about events that happened in waking life at the same time the dream occurred, or later on, without having any previous knowledge of the event; seventy-one percent believed in the revelatory power of dreams (Haraldsson 1978). This survey was repeated recently, on the initiative of Terry Gunnell, Associate Professor of Ethnology at the University of Iceland. I assisted, adding a few questions to the section which addresses beliefs and practices related to dreaming. The responses to this new survey actually indicate a slight increase in the percentage of people who have experienced revelatory dreams. Whereas thirty-six percent answered affirmatively in the 1970s, this had increased to thirty-nine percent in 2006, and was up to forty-two percent in 2007 (Arnaldsdóttir et al. 2007).

The question which was asked in the surveys was: Are you *berdreymin(n)*? *Berdreyminn* is one of the central notions of Icelandic dreaming philosophy and practice. *Ber* means "naked" or "clear", while *dreyminn* (adjective, nominative masculine) derives from the verb *að dreyma* ("to dream"). Berdreyminn refers to the ability to perceive, while dreaming, with clarity and vision, those things, beings, elements, relationships and powers, which in waking life do exist, but are hidden. This hidden dimension of life is both of a temporal and spatial nature. Dreamers may cross spatial boundaries that in waking life are experienced as impassable. Thus, dreams are valued for their potential to reveal events that happen in the parallel waking universe at the time the dream is dreamt. Dreaming may also imply moving beyond temporal boundaries, disclosing knowledge of the ways in which events are related and, therewith, about the waking past and future. Relationships with the dead are significant in this respect, because the dead are thought to use dreams to reveal underlying causes of events, giving insight into how life will unfold, or to inform the living of their condition, which might inflict problems on waking life. The important implication for anthropology is that the knowledge generated through dreaming is often used to

3 No manuscripts written in the twelfth century have survived. However, references to dreams appear, for example, in Landnámabók ("Book of Settlements"), which is thought to have been written in the twelfth century, even though the eldest surviving manuscript dates from the thirteenth century.

direct and motivate actions in the waking lives of dreamers, or of their friends and family.

The interaction between dreaming, for many Icelanders so crucial to knowing the world, and waking life is expressed in a short construction, commonly heard in Iceland when dreams are narrated: *Mig* [acc.] *dreymdi draum* [acc.] [*fyrir einhverju* [dat.]] '[It] dreamed me [accusative] a dream [accusative] [for somebody/something [dative]]' (Kratschmer and Heijnen 2010, 339-340). Freely translated to English, this would be: "I dreamt a dream, which indicates that such and such will happen in waking life, or in the life of the person to whom the dream refers". From a linguistic point of view, different syntactic interpretations can be given of this construction, depending on the theoretical stand taken. While traditional grammar considers it as a double (accusative) object construction, generative grammar (see, for example, Hrafnbjargarson 2004, 133) analyses it as a construction with a human accusative subject and nonhuman accusative object.

The syntactic interpretation from a perspective of traditional grammar (double object) points to the idea that there is an unidentified agentive entity (the implicit nominative subject of the verb), a "power" exercising a direct influence (marked by the direct objects) on both the dreaming person and the dream (its content), sometimes regarding a third party (the prepositional dative object). The verb "to dream" shows a complex valence pattern with a series of actants (one nominative and two accusatives) and the frequent presence of a standardised circumstant (a prepersonal dative), mirroring a complex constellation of engaged entities.

A generative grammar analysis (human accusative subject) gives a slightly different, but equally intriguing interpretation. The dreaming person combines "agentive" (subjecthood) and patient /theme features, "acting" and "undergoing the action" at the same time. The dream itself is equally under direct influence of the action/agent. Also in this interpretation, a complex constellation of entities is involved (Kratschmer and Heijnen 2010, 351-352).

The Icelandic language differs, in this respect, from other related languages, such as Danish and German. In those languages "it dreamed me a dream" has evolved from the dreamer being acted upon, to "I dreamed", the dreamer being a creator of his or her own dreams, while in Icelandic a linguistic continuity can be traced in the use of the expression "it dreamed me a dream" (Kratschmer and Heijnen 2010, 338-339). These linguistic interpretations are in line with my ethnographic observations of dreamsharing in Iceland and the important theoretical point made by Jędrei and Shaw (1992, 12) in their volume *Dreaming, Religion and Society in Africa* -that: ". . . there is no simple dichotomy of 'passive' dream experiences and 'active' negotiation in waking life; both strands are interwoven, and feed back into each other" (Jędrei and Shaw 1992, 12). Jędrei and Shaw, inspired by Foucault's notion of "technologies of the self," call attention to the "duality of agency" in dreaming. When dreams are seen as being con-

trolled by external powers, the actions dreamers undertake may be subjected to these powers (ibid., 10-12).

According to the Icelandic dream philosophy found throughout a thousand years, dreamers are social actors, in the sense that they act in the dream and engage with the persons or beings also present in the dream sphere. Should the dream be classified as something other than a processing of common daily experience, dreamers are not considered as subjects whose minds create dreams, but rather viewed as undergoing the process of dreaming, while also influencing the dream. Thus, dreaming in Iceland is not seen as an interruption of life, but rather as continuous with the waking condition, both hermeneutically and in experience.

This is not a specifically Icelandic interpretation of the activity of dreaming, but is related to the phenomenological nature of the dream. Jean Hering designates the images and events which dreamers experience as true *ideae adventiciae*. The images and events offer themselves phenomenologically, as penetrating to the dreamer from the outside, independent of will or inclination (Hering 1947, 196). Dreamers can act in dreams, can pick their way through the phenomena, but they are just as much at their mercy as in waking life. Hering posits: "In a dream one can discern characteristics in objects or witness events, which one never in the least knew one was familiar with. In any case, true observation is entirely possible in dreams, and for the dreamer at any rate, *as long as he is dreaming*, his object world is a true source of knowledge" (ibid., 200).[4] As this quote illustrates, philosophical studies (Hering 1947; Bergson 1958), but also recent research in neurobiology (e.g. Hobson 2009)[5] have pointed out that (internally generated) perception (and thus the generation of knowledge) is possible while dreaming. In a society, such as Iceland, that ascribes an ontological

4 Compare Michele Stephen's concept of autonomous imagination (Stephen 1995, 98-108).

5 J. Allan Hobson (2009) claims that perception is possible both while being awake and while dreaming, but he recognizes the following differences between waking and dream consciousness: "Waking consciousness can be defined as the awareness of the external world, our bodies, and our selves (including the awareness of awareness) that humans experience when awake. When dreaming we are also consciously aware; we have perception and emotion, which are organised in a scenario-like structure, but we erroneously consider ourselves to be awake despite abundant cognitive evidence that this cannot be true. [...] Waking consciousness is richer than dream consciousness in allowing the measurable distinction between task and default modes of the brain and the related difference between background and foreground processing. Dream consciousness is richer than waking consciousness in its ability to create a remarkable reliable simulacrum of the world and the notable capacity to integrate highly disparate images and themes into a seamless scenario" (Hobson 2009, 803). Hobson defines perception as: "Detailed visuomotor and other sense modality information that constitutes the representational structure of awareness. Such awareness must involve the integration of emotion" (ibid.).

status to the dreaming experience, the dream becomes not simply a psychological state, but a social event and an epistemological endeavour (cf. Poirier 2003, 108).

This book, then, is a quest for a re-evaluation of the epistemology of dreaming and its relation to waking life, and, consequently, for positioning the dream more centrally within anthropological theory. The dream's epistemology has been looked upon with suspicion, within Western philosophy. How could it be otherwise? Christianity supported the view that dreaming could provide knowledge that enhanced understanding of the divine, but dreams could also be false if the devil was involved (Parman 1991, 30). The church in its efforts to enforce its hierarchy sought to control access to divine knowledge. As Parman writes: "It was the privilege of kings and saints alone to have personal, ecstatic, direct confrontation with God, demons or angels in dreams" (ibid., 45). In addition to the teachings of Christianity, the influential Cartesian philosophy stated firmly that knowledge could only be generated through conscious thought, and a few centuries later, Freud taught us that sleep interrupts social life. Even though, as Kracke (2003, 213) has pointed out, Freud viewed the dream as being intimately involved with the relationships of peoples' current and past life, Freud also claimed that dreams had nothing to communicate to persons, other than the dreamer (Freud 1970, 167).

Attempts have been made by anthropologists to reconcile this heritage of Western thought with the ethnographic observation that dreaming as a source of knowledge and motivation for action is highly valued in many societies (see e.g. Fabian 1966; Tedlock 1987; Ewing 1990; Jędrej and Shaw 1992; Perrin 1992; Reynolds 1992; Goulet 1994; Graham 1995; Stephen 1995; Schnepel 2001; Kracke 2003a, 2003b; Mageo 2003; Lohmann 2003, 2010; Poirier 2003, 2005; Willerslev 2004; Vitebsky 2005; Heijnen 2005, 2007, 2010; Glaskin 2010; Edgar and Henig 2010; Kirtsoglou 2010). Speaking in general terms, there are five main approaches that mark the history of anthropological theory of dreaming. I will discuss these in more detail in chapter 1: In the work of Victorian anthropologists, for example Edward Tylor (1891) and James Frazer (1993), we find an evolutionary perspective to dreaming that recognizes a fundamental distinction between the western and primitive minds, the primitive, non-western mind being unable to distinguish between waking and dreaming experience. The revolutionary aspect of the work of Tylor on dreams was his claim that dream imagery was the very source of religious beliefs.

Influenced by the work of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, anthropologists such as Charles Seligman (1924) and Jacques Steward Lincoln (1935) criticised the evolutionary assertion that primitive people confuse their waking and dreaming experiences (Lincoln 1935, 28). Seligman (1924) and Lincoln (1935) argued instead that the mechanisms of dreaming are universal, even though the manifest content of dreams reflects the culture of individuals (Lincoln 1935, 23). In the 1950s and 1960s, the influence of Freud and Jung gave rise to a focus on content analysis and cross-cultural comparison (Hall 1951; Eggan 1952;

D'Andrade 1961; Hall and Van de Castle 1966). Dorothy Eggan (1952; 1955) used content analysis to describe the tension between societal demands and individual personalities6, while D'Andrade (1961) compared dream reports from various societies to demonstrate the existence of universal symbolism (D'Andrade 1961).

More recently, we can find explicit influences of Freud's and Jung's work in the work of anthropologists, such as Thomas Gregor (1985), Waud Kracke (2003a, 2003b), and Jeanette Mageo (2003), who work from the premise that dreams are enmeshed in a network of cultural and linguistic systems of meaning, but their main analytical point of reference is (universal) personal emotions, such as wishes and concerns, that represent the deeper meaning of the dream and are communicated by the dreamer in culturally accepted narrative forms (see especially Kracke 2003a, 223; 2003b).

Jonathan Fabian (1966) and other, primarily British anthropologists (e.g. Ray 1992), distanced themselves strongly from a psychological informed approach, by focusing on the cultural dream report as intentional message. According to this perspective, it is not important whether the dream told has been dreamt or not, the focus is rather on what the cultural dream account does in a social context. Fabian, for example, has illustrated in his discussion of the Jamaa movement in Zaire, how dream accounts as personally communicated messages can legitimate access to certain roles in society (cf. Edgar and Henig 2010).

In 1987,the volume Dreaming. Anthropological and Psychological Interpretations, edited by Barbara Tedlock, was published, marking a new direction for the anthropology of dreaming. Tedlock argues for an approach to dreaming that integrates perspectives from psychology and anthropology, and makes the important point that we need to broaden our methodological scope by including observations of the psychodynamics of dream narrations, studying the sharing of dreams in their "natural communicative context" (Tedlock 1987, 1991).

In Tedlock's work, as well as that of Graham (1995), Edgar (1999), Kracke (2003a, 2003b) and Mageo (2003), a distinction is made between the dream experience as a private, mental experience and the sharing of dreams as an act of externalizing this subjective experience within a cultural context. Recently, as is illustrated by the special issue on dreaming of History and Anthropology that Iain Edgar and I guest edited (Heijnen and Edgar 2010), the distinction between

---

6 Eggan was influenced by the work of Sigmund Freud, for example by his notion of regression, but she also pointed out limitations in Freud's psychoanalysis, arguing that the manifest content of dreams should receive attention, on the basis that ego (and not only the ID and super ego) also is involved in dreaming as a way of seeking solutions for waking problems (Eggan 1952, 471). The problem solving capacity of dreams can also be found in the work of Carl Jung, who wrote that dreaming could be seen as "anticipation in the unconscious of future conscious achievements, something like a preliminary exercise or sketch, or a plan roughed out in advance. Its symbolic content sometimes outlines the solution of a conflict" (Jung 1948: 255).

the dream as internal subjective experience and the dream account as public social performance is broken down. The argument developed in our volume is that dreamers are not reduced to non-social persons, but notions of personhood and cosmologies are embedded in the dream experience and influence the recalling of the dream, as well as the ways dreams are narrated, interpreted and acted upon. It is this line of thought that this book explores in more detail.

The notion of personhood and the cosmology which we encounter in Icelandic dream sharing resembles cosmologies generally assumed to be reminiscent of "traditional" world views of, for example, many indigenous, non-European circumpolar peoples, from Inuit groups (Kolband and Law 2001) to hunters and reindeer herders across Siberia (Willerslev 2004, 2007; Vitebsky 2005; cf. Aðalsteinsson 1999). Such a cosmology may seem incongruous in a modern European society, such as Iceland. Yet Icelandic society proves otherwise, and urges us to rethink the relationship between modernity, postmodernity, and religious ideas. I argue in chapter two that the social meaning and epistemological value ascribed to the dream in Iceland is not a reinvention of tradition in a post-modern attempt at re-enchanting the world (cf. Bauman 1993, 33), but has been a continuous part of Icelandic everyday life for a thousand years, and is still being adapted. Moreover, in Iceland, the perspective which views dreams as an important source of knowledge about other times and places, coexists readily with other modern, post-modern, and Christian conceptions of the dream and cosmologies. This book, as well as the work of Stewart (1997) and Kirtsoglou (2010) on Greece, and an unpublished paper by Gabriela Kiliánová on Slovakia[7], illustrates that there are multiple perspectives to dreams within European society (cf. Kratschmer and Heijnen 2010).

The coexistence of various cultural dream theories, as we encounter in many societies, have been approached anthropologically in different ways (e.g. Tedlock 1991; Crapanzano 2001; Kracke 2003a, 219; Lohmann 2010; Kirtsoglou 2010). While Crapanzano links the existing of various dream theories to the particular creative nature of dreams, Lohmann, in his recent work (2007, 2010), has put forward the existence of six types of cultural dream theories: nonsense, discernment, message, generative, soul travel and visitation theories. He underlines that several of these perspectives can be found in one single society, ordered as on a continuum, and that the existence of perspectives can vary through time. Lohmann views the various cultural dream theories that are created and passed down as resources that are evoked by certain dream images (2010). The argument acknowledges that the various dream theories are linked to several cosmologies that might coexist, even within a single person. Rather than addressing how various cosmologies clash, I will focus my analysis

7 The paper 'Dreams as a communication method between the living and the dead' by Gabriela Kiliánová was presented at our workshop 'Imprints of dreaming', at the 10th EASA Biennial Conference in Ljubljana.

on how the specific qualities of these cosmologies generate particular modes of interaction. Thus, my social theory of dreaming, which I link to a theory of cosmology, provides also an analytical and theoretical framework for understanding the variegation of cultures, and the maintenance of diversity, despite processes as comprehensive and far-reaching as the introduction of Christianity and the development of positivist science.

Iceland

Iceland was one of the last places in the world to be inhabited. In the latter part of the ninth century AD, political unrest, attempts to unite the many kingdoms of Norway, improvements in shipbuilding techniques, and a shortage of land have been mentioned as possible reasons for the rise of a westward migration of people, mainly from West Norway, whereby Iceland became settled (Hastrup 1985, 7-11; Nordal 1990, 13-28; Ólason 1998, 24; Byock 2001, 7-9; Christiansen 2002, 214-36). Prior to the settlement of Iceland, which started around 870 AD, Norse settlements had been established in the Faroe Islands and the northern parts of the British Isles, mainly the Hebrides, the Orkneys, and Shetlands. Some of Iceland's settlers came from these colonies (Byock 2001, 9). At the end of the tenth century, when all the land had been claimed in Iceland, Greenland, discovered in the first part of the tenth century by Gunnbjörn Úlfsson, when he was blown off-course, became the next target of Norse expansion. The so-called Eastern and Western settlements were established in the southern part of Greenland, and from there, settlement attempts were made in North America (Jones 1986, 73). These attempts were not successful, and mark the end of the migratory movement.

The settlement of Iceland can be partly reconstructed through the analysis of written records, place names, and archaeological findings.[8] Written documents, such as *Landnámabok*, the "Book of Settlement" from the beginning of the twelfth century, *Íslendingabók*, "Book of Icelanders", written by Ari Þorgilsson around the same time, and *Haralds Saga Hins Hárfagra* (the Saga of Harald Hárfagri), claim that the ancestors of the Icelandic people were the farming elite of Norway. When Haraldur Hárfagri became king, in 860, he united large parts of Norway. He is described as a hard ruler, who deprived farmers of their land. The old literature leads us to believe that, rather than submit to the king, the Norwegian ancestors of the Icelanders took their destiny into their own hands. They chose to sail away, and seek their luck elsewhere. The Saga of Harald Hárfagri mentions: "Í þeim ófriði, er Haraldr konungr gekk til landz í Noregi, þá funnusk og byggðusk útlönd, Færeyjar og Ísland" ("Amid all the unrest, when

8 See Friðriksson and Vésteinsson (2003), for a critical discussion of the available data, and of research done so far.

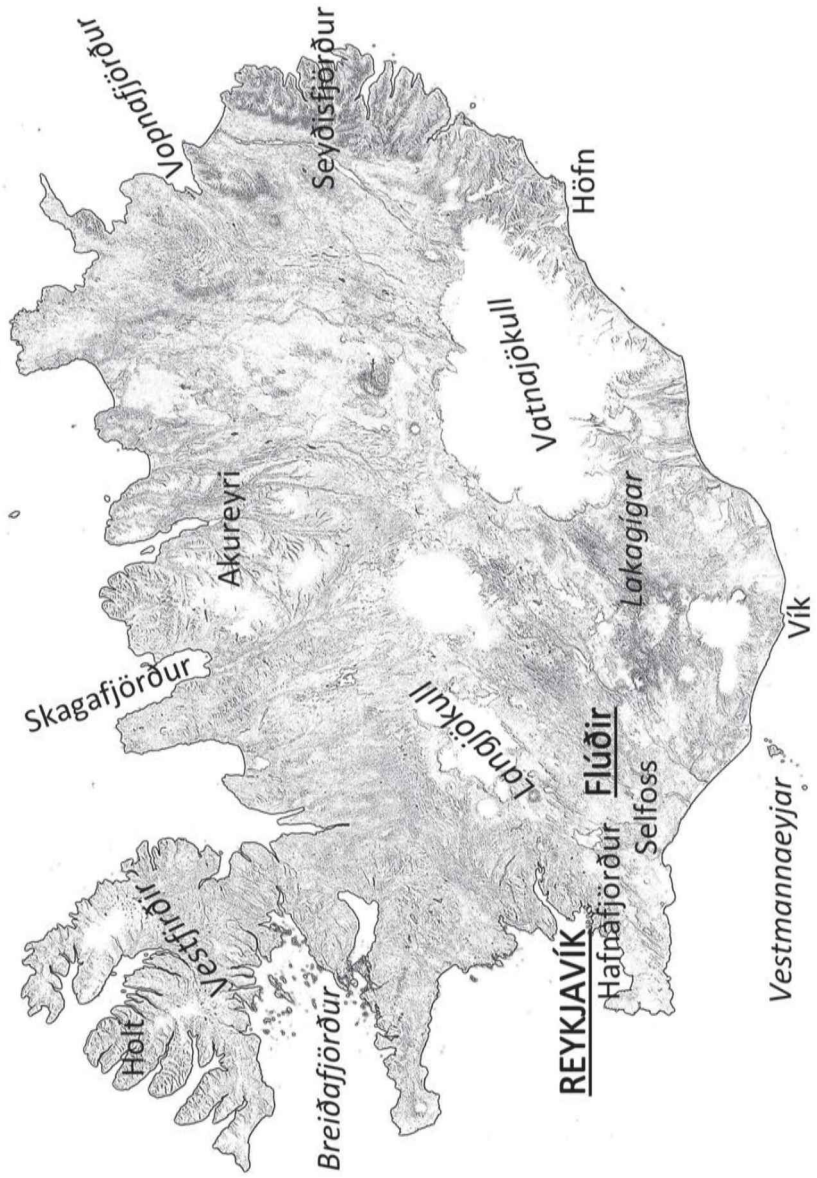

Figure 1.Map of Iceland. Published with kind permission of the National Land Survey of Iceland

Harald was seeking to subdue all the lands of Norway, the Faeroes and Iceland, lands out beyond the sea, were found and settled") (Snorri Sturluson 1966, 53, translation: Snorri Sturluson 1932, 57).

According to the Book of Settlement, the first group that settled in Iceland consisted of 383 men and 54 women (Steffensen 1975), but it is generally thought that this is not the complete number. In addition to the Norwegian farming elite, the Icelandic literature also mentions the presence of Celtic people, especially slaves. Recent studies of historical sources and of Icelandic DNA have uncovered evidence of a considerable number of British women in the Icelandic ancestral group, probably half of the number of women who arrived in Iceland at that time (Gulcher et al. 2000; Helgason et al. 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2003). But despite the Celtic influence, the Icelandic legal system and the language are definitely of Norwegian origin. It is widely assumed that a general assembly, the *Alþing*, was established in 930. The assembly consisted of a council of law, in which it is assumed that thirty-nine chieftains (*goðar*) were seated, along with a legal speaker, whose responsibility it was to recite the laws, and a judiciary institution of forty-eight judges, nominated by the goðar (Karlsson 2000, 22-23). The establishment of the Alþing is generally seen as marking the end of the settlement period. Still, archaeological evidence reveals that when the fertile land along the coast had been claimed, farms were established further inland, also after the establishment of the Alþing (Smith 1995, 339).

Relationships with the native land of the (male) ancestors were maintained by sea voyages, and it has been generally postulated by scholars that international networks of trade and alliances were especially intense during the first three centuries following the discovery of Iceland. Then, they gradually declined, owing to the worsening of living conditions on the island, and the loss of sea-going vessels (Hastrup 1985, 224-28; Karlsson 2000, 103).

For various reasons difficult to pin down, Iceland became formally included in the political realm of Norway, when Icelandic chieftains entered into an alliance with the Norwegian Crown in 1262. This alliance, called *Gamli Sáttmáli* ("Old Covenant"), lasted until the Danish King Olav inherited the Norwegian throne in 1380. The new Norwegian king abolished the institution of chieftaincy. From then on, the council of law consisted of farmers appointed by the Norwegian king's representative. Iceland received its own book of laws, and became a separate legal district of Norway (Karlsson 2000, 79-87).

Archaeological research and literary sources indicate that the Icelanders accepted Christianity in the year 999 or 1000. Kirsten Hastrup (1985, 185) mentions that, in the initial stages, Christianity did not replace all pre-Christian ideas and practices, but moved them into the private sphere. Orri Vésteinsson (2005, 74) postulates that initially, in the period from 1140 to 1240, the church consolidated its power. The Protestant Reformation was forced on Iceland by the Danish King Christian III, in a process that lasted from about 1537 until 1551. The Lutheran church defined magic as evil, which led to several witch hunts during the seventeenth century. In contrast to what took place in many European

societies, most burned as witches in Iceland were men. Gísli Pálsson (1995, 119) argues that the reason for this should be identified with the fact that words and poetry were central to Icelandic magic, and they belonged to the male domain.

When the Danish king indirectly inherited Iceland in 1380, and the Norse settlements in Greenland had disappeared, Iceland became situated on the outskirts of the Danish realm. The centuries that followed were characterised by increasing isolation and poverty (Karlsson 2000, 100-05). In 1602, the Danish crown introduced restrictions to foreign trade, resulting in a trade monopoly. Already in the early Icelandic laws it was set down that landless persons were not allowed to establish a household, but must work on another man's farm (Eggertsson 1996). The trade monopoly only further supported this structure, by restricting opportunities to accumulate capital through fishing and trade. In this way, the power of the small Icelandic elite who tried to secure control of the rural labour force was consolidated. As late as 1808, the Royal Financial Bureau in Copenhagen passed a law stating that "in the future, no one will be allowed to settle by the coast, unless he proves that, in addition to the house he rents or purchases, he has access to enough land to support at least one cow or six ewes" (Hálfdanarson 1991, 67). Thus, farms were the main social and economic units, and the farming class continued to form, in the Icelandic conception, the core of society, far into the twentieth century (Gunnlaugsson 1988, 33).

In the period from 1783 to 1785, an extremely violent volcanic eruption, the Lakagígar eruption in the Skaftafell area, caused the death of approximately ten thousand Icelanders, reducing Iceland's population to only thirty-nine thousand inhabitants (Karlsson 2000, 181). Only in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when child mortality was reduced, did population numbers grow significantly again. The countryside became overcrowded, and one reaction was the emigration of approximately seventeen thousand Icelanders, primarily to Manitoba, Canada, between 1870 and 1914 (ibid., 236). At the same time, because of expansion in trade and developments in the fishing industry, a part of the population moved to coastal settlements and to Reykjavík. The law that restricted the free establishment of households could no longer be reinforced, and was rejected by the Icelandic Parliament in 1894, although restrictions on cottagers lasted until 1907 (Þorsteinsson and Jónsson 1991).

The development of the fishing industry was made possible by the abandonment of the trade monopoly, in 1855. The fishing industry was mechanised between 1902 and 1930, partly thanks to foreign capital, which made investments possible (Karlsson 2000, 287-92). The Icelanders started to buy trawlers, and the number of people engaged in fishing increased drastically. The Second World War led to the further modernisation of Icelandic society. The economy received a substantial input through the presence of first, the British, and later, the American military forces, which provided many jobs.

Iceland's modern economy is largely based on the export of fish. The extension and defence of the country's fishing grounds are important political issues,

to which the so-called "cod wars" with Great Britain have testified. In the 1960s, initial attempts were made to attract foreign industries by offering cheap hydroelectric power. In 1969, the first aluminium smelter opened in Hafnafjörður, a suburb of Reykjavík. Nowadays, approximately seventy percent of Iceland's working population is employed in services, and only four percent in agriculture (Hagstofa Íslands 2000). Several farmers have shifted from animal husbandry to the cultivation of crops, and a few, who live in geothermal areas, use the natural hot water supply for the cultivation of vegetables in greenhouses.

Around the millennium shift, dramatic changes occurred again in Icelandic society. Already in the 1970s, the cornerstones for a neoliberal policy were laid. The adjustment of Iceland's legal and administrative systems to provisions of the European Economic Area (EEA), in the 1990s, followed by privatisation, gave rise to an explosive growth of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and other international trade activities by Icelandic companies (e.g. see Tómasdóttir and Ólafsson 2007). After a brief blossoming, Iceland's economy collapsed, in the autumn of 2008. These economic developments have led, and still lead, to profound changes in the society, the scale of which is difficult to comprehend at this time. The period of high-risk investment challenged previous laws and customs related to the shared ownership of natural resources, led to the (further) dismantling of the egalitarian ideology, and changed the relationship between capital and countryside, to the advantage of Reykjavík. The economic crisis, both in Iceland and throughout the world, has made Iceland once again more dependent on the fishing industry. It has also caused emigration from the country and lead to an application to join the European Union in 2009.

Pursuing ethnography

I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork amid the urban life of Reykjavík and the rural life of the district of Hrunamannahreppur, situated about one hundred and twenty kilometres east of the capital. While more than half of Iceland's three hundred and nine thousand inhabitants live in Reykjavík and its suburbs, the district of Hrunamannahreppur, which spreads over an area of more than two hundred and fifty square kilometres, is home to only a few more than seven hundred people.

In Reykjavík, I conducted long-term fieldwork in 1996 and 1997, while studying "Icelandic for Foreign Students" at the University of Iceland. I had embarked upon language studies, because my previous research in Iceland had made it clear to me that it was crucial to learn Icelandic to conduct anthropological fieldwork in a satisfactory way.[9] Living in Reykjavík, I trusted that

9 My interest for Icelandic society originated in an attempt to balance my personal wish to engage with a society that was different than The Netherlands, where I was raised, with major paradigms in my anthropological education in the early 1990s, related to the "reflexive turn of anthropology" and an emerging interest in conducting an-

through engagement with everyday life, a suitable topic for my research would emerge that was of relevance not only to me as anthropologist, but to the Icelandic people. I stumbled over the topic of dream sharing, which had hardly been studied in contemporary Iceland. The anthropologists Gísli Pálsson and E. Paul Durrenberger mention the narration of dreams in a few articles in which they demystify the idea that differences in success between Icelandic fishermen are rooted in access to knowledge gained through dreams. However, their focus is on strategies in Icelandic fisheries, not on dream sharing (Pálsson and Durrenberger 1982, 1983, 1986). The late Icelandic ethnologist, Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson, too, had published several articles on the subject (Eiríksson 1972, 1983, 1984, 1992). These are informative overviews of several dream symbols and main themes of dream accounts, but they do not aim to situate the sharing of dreams in a social context.

Being motivated to use Icelandic as research language, I decided that it would be best to begin right away. The first dialogues and interviews on dreams that I conducted in Icelandic had of course limitations. I have recorded most of my interviews and when I listen to these first interviews again, I note how I often changed topic at times that things just became exciting, due to a limited understanding and vocabulary. However, the interviews provided me with rich material, because everything was new to me in the beginning and this bold start made me fluent in the language in a relatively short period of time.

The language was not the only challenge I faced. Access to people and their dreams in an urban area where life primarily takes place indoor and people spent more hours at their working place than the average European man or woman, was almost as challenging. Initially I explored two areas through the "contact introduction snowball effect method": the University of Iceland where I studied Icelandic, and the working environment of my then Dutch boyfriend who had found a job as a cleaner at a house of the elderly in Reykjavík. The group of highly-educated people I came in contact with in my daily life and the colleagues of my boyfriend, who, in most cases, had fewer years of education, taught me right from the beginning that multiple perspectives to dreams exist in Icelandic society. In the house of the elderly, dreams were a common topic of conversation – as a matter of fact, it was he who pointed out to me in the first place how peculiar it was that Icelanders talked so much about dreams. In my academic circles, conversations about dreams took a different course at first. When I managed to arrange interviews on dreams with highly-educated people, many took upon them the role of expert and presented the idea that dreams could provide people with knowledge on the past, the current, and the future as reminiscent of past traditions. Encouraged by the fact that among other groups, dreams were a common topic of interest, fully integrated with everyday life, I continued to pursue the topic among high-educated Icelanders. Several times I

---

thropology at home. In 1992, I conducted a short anthropological field study in Iceland, as an undergraduate student in cultural anthropology.

experienced how, after I had turned off my recorder and closed my notebook, people began to talk to me about their own experiences. Some mentioned to me dreams that had been meaningful in their own lives or that of others, varying from money they had won in the lottery, to how they had met dead beloved ones in their dreams. At other times, the interview was personal right away, but, often, in those cases, interviews were conducted behind closed doors and I was not always allowed to use the data, other than for my own reflections.

Wishing to capture analytically the complexity that I encountered through exploring these two settings, I worked on broadening my group of informants.[10] Friends and acquaintances helped me accessing their networks, which enabled me to come into contact with the networks of their friends and to include in my research people of various ages, backgrounds, gender, and with diverse professions. Through these weak networks (Granovetter 1973), as well as through spontaneous meetings, I managed to interview nearly 100 persons about dreams, varying from children from the age of three to ninety year old fishermen.

The semi-structured interviews I conducted provided me with the necessary data to understand the complexity of dream sharing, and to analyse to what degree symbols and their meanings were shared among (certain groups of) Iceland's population. They also showed me in which ways age, education and gender influenced the way people thought about dreams and used them in their everyday lives. Additionally, by listening to hundreds of dreams and their interpretation, I picked up the practice of interpreting dreams. I learned the multiple meanings of symbols, the various combinations in which images could appear and generate meaning, and the interconnectedness between waking and dreaming life.

In order to grasp how dreams were integrated in everyday life, isolated interviews were not sufficient (cf. Tedlock 1991). I soon began to work with series of interviews with the same persons, and to regularly have intensive dialogues about dreams with people who turned into close friends and whose lives and dreams I was able to follow through several years (in a few cases even throughout a decade). Participant observation has been crucial to capture the social context in which dreams were shared, but I was also able in the initial phase of my research to observe the sharing of dreams in its "natural communicative context", as Tedlock (1991) has proposed. However, my interest in dreams was quickly known and my presence could evoke the narration of dreams, as well as in certain cases, silence on the topic. With time, -- when my dreams had become more Icelandic, my language fluent and Icelanders began to refer to Iceland as my home-- I felt that I myself had become part of the "natural communicative context".

---

10 At that time, I was inspired by the work of Ulf Hannerz, especially his books Exploring the City: Inquiries Toward an Urban Anthropology of 1980 and Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organisation of Meaning of 1992 (cf. Pálsson and Durrenberger 1996, 2).

Many dialogues about dreams were extended beyond my physical presence in Iceland and continued in letters, email messages and telephone calls, after I had left the island. Being able to follow the ways dreams were integrated in the lives of my friends through longer periods of times, I became aware that the various perspectives to dreams and the diverse ways of interpreting dreams could not be explained solely by social factors such as education, gender, profession, area of residence, even though these are influential. I noticed how one single person could change between perspectives throughout life, even from one moment to another.

In 1999, I returned to Reykjavík, having received a grant to work as guest researcher at the Árni Magnússon Institute. This institute has the custody of the Icelandic manuscripts that were returned by Denmark in the 1970s and is dedicated to research related to the manuscripts, and to Icelandic culture in general. In the initial phase of my research, I had explored dreams in literature to give some context to my observations of everyday life. At a later stage, I became aware that a study of literary sources was important, because of the relationship between oral and written dream accounts. Dreams were not considered to be personal only, but could be retold by others or find their way into written and literary accounts. I had encountered in Reykjavík's libraries numerous accounts of dreams in novels, personal diaries, biographies, dream collections, etc. In addition, my Icelandic studies had introduced me to the fascinating Medieval Icelandic literature in which several hundreds of dream accounts are found (see my discussion in chapter 2). My stay at the Árni Magnússon Institute made it possible to analyse these accounts. In addition, I analysed at the institute the interviews on dreams and relevant topics that had been conducted since the late 1960s by the Icelandic scholars Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson, Jón Samsonarson and Helga Jóhannsdóttir, in collaboration with the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service. I also investigated the collection of answers to some of the 102 questionnaires that the National Museum of Iceland (*Þjóðminjasafnið*) sent from the 1960s onward to a selected group of informants.[11] These data collections had hardly been touched by researchers for analytical purposes and the questionnaires were somewhat biased by the conviction of a few ethnologists that original Icelandic culture was represented by knowledge and traditions of elderly people in traditional occupations, such as farming and fishing. Thus, the informants selected for interviews were those people who were considered to be *fróðlegir*, a term used for persons with extended (cultural) knowledge (cf. Eiríksson 1971). The purpose of collecting data was to safeguard this knowledge before it would disappear due to processes of modernisation. In the 1990s a more dynamic understanding of the concept of culture opened up for new ways of collecting data and a wider understanding of "informants".

The tremendous wealth of the Icelandic literary sources provided me with the unique opportunity to trace the use of dreams from the current to the past,

11 See list of questionnaires in the bibliography.

opening up for an enhanced understanding of current practices through including a historical perspective. This also worked the other way around. My analyses of contemporary ethnographic material provided me with new insights into the older material. For example, the importance of the negotiation of meaning in contemporary dream sharing made me attentive to similar practices in the older material.

As Ton Otto (1997, 96) and others have pointed out, the main anthropological method of participant observation is not a straightforward and clear-cut methodology. I moved back and forth between the literature, the ethnological collections, dialogues, experiences, observations, semi-structured interviews, and surveys.

Having conducted fieldwork in Iceland's capital, my wish that the data I collected would be to some degree representative for Icelandic society in general, made me seek out dreaming and waking life in other parts of the country. A friend of mine who lives in Reykjavík, was born and raised in the village of Flúðir, located in the rural district Hrunamannahreppur[12] in South Iceland, where his parents and siblings still live. My friend and his wife helped me find a job with his sister, who, together with her husband, is a vegetable producer. The village Flúðir has 280 inhabitants and was founded in 1929 when the first building, a school, was constructed near a natural hot water supply. This short history is typical for Icelandic towns and villages. Iceland's settlement pattern was until the late nineteenth century characterised by, for the most part, self-sufficient farms, which lay scattered in the landscape. As also Kirsten Hastrup (1998, 55) has pointed out, when she in the 1980s in a similar way moved from Reykjavík to the Icelandic countryside, most inhabitants of urban areas in Iceland retain a sense of belonging to the rural area where they are raised or their family comes from. When Hastrup conducted her fieldwork, it was still common for children during the long summer holidays to spend time at the countryside, where the cradle of Icelandic culture was thought to be (Hastrup 1998, 55).

Many inhabitants of Flúðir and surrounding areas support themselves through the cultivations of crops in greenhouses that are heated through geothermal activity in the area. Otherwise inhabitants of Hrunamannahreppur are employed in animal husbandry, services and technical trades. Working many hours and from a young age, as well as taking and creating opportunities, is part of the Icelandic sense of self. Rather than the job description, it is to a large extent work itself and being able to sustain oneself and one's family, as well as one's family affiliations, that are the elements of people's identity.

---

12 A hreppur is the smallest existing administrative unit in Iceland. Hreppar (pl.) are known to have been in existence from at least 1097 AD when tithing was introduced (Simpson, et al. 2001:180). Hrunamannahreppur covers an area of 1391 square kilometres and counts around 800 inhabitants.

Figure 2. Packing tomatoes in Flúðir. Photo: Sigurður Sigmundsson, reproduced with his kind permission

This leads to a very flexible workforce that can quickly adapt to the well-known booms and bust of the Icelandic economy. It is not uncommon for people to work as priest and farmer, cleaner and writer, or carpenter and fisherman. I followed common practice and worked as anthropologist in the area, but also as tomato picker in one of the local greenhouses.

This proved to be an excellent way of investigating dream sharing and everyday life. While my hands picked and packed tomatoes, I could listen to stories about the community, the people, their lives and their dreams, as well as pose the many questions that had arisen in the process of collecting and analysing my data. In addition, my work included a small apartment attached to the greenhouse of one of the neighbours. Even though the area is scarcely populated, there was at that time a housing shortage. Another advantage was that my employer was a profound dreamer and always willing to share her dreams with me, as she did with others. She helped me greatly by introducing me to people in the area.

The sensitivity of dreams, the importance of social networks and genealogies, and everyday-life taking place indoors, made me again dependent on the "contact-introduction-snowball effect method". I experienced that my position as employee and my affiliation with the family in the area, was a more important frame of reference for people than my role as researcher, even though people were aware of both. Due to this, I was welcomed at many households in the district with great hospitality. Initially, my visits seemed to be interpreted as

rather formal, signalled by the amount of food I was served: cakes, pastries, pancakes, several kinds of cheese and fruit. In order to come closer to people and to enhance trust and understanding, I tried to repeat my visits as much as possible. Another stay of several months in the area a year later, when I was hosted by a former colleague of mine from the greenhouse, gave me the opportunity to follow people's lives through a longer period of time, to follow up on issues and see how the interpretation of certain dreams developed in interaction with waking events.

In addition to my work, and the visits and interviews I conducted in Hrunamannahreppur, I participated in many social events. I attended, with local acquaintances and friends, theatre plays, concerts, carnival, women nights, etc. Once every week, I joined the elderly in their handicraft activities and learned bookbinding. Through talking with my fellow bookbinders, who were significantly more experienced than I, and with their skilful teacher, I learned, for example, how dreams were integrated in agricultural life. One of my friends from Reykjavík had once mentioned to me that her father, who was a farmer, would not have survived without his dreams. I began to understand the meaning of her words while talking with people in Hrunamannahreppur. The elderly often told me dreams in which local animals, such as horses, sheep and cows appeared. On the basis of the various colours and behaviour of these animals, they knew whether we could expect rain, snow or a dry period, how long this weather condition would last and from which direction the wind would blow. Many of these symbols were not personal, but shared, also among younger generations. [13] For example, my employer, who was in her early forties, told me regularly dreams about white sheep, indicating that we would get snow. Her husband, without using too many words, could act on such a dream by moving machinery inside that could not endure snow fall. Weather dreams, apart from providing guidance in uncertain situations that farming and husbandry at high latitude necessarily involves, are a good topic of discussion in larger assemblies.

The outdoor swimming pool in Flúðir that is fed by the natural hot water supply was another important fieldsite. Many relax after work in the hotpots and

---

13 Robert Desjarlais, during his fieldwork in Nepal with the Yolmo Sherpa, noted in a similar way a large degree of agreement among individuals concerning the meaning of dream imagery and called this "an implicit 'dictionary' of dream symbolism" (Desjarlais 1990, 102-117). This, of course, also evokes Lincoln's term "cultural pattern dreams". However, it should be noted that with this term a different kind of dream is meant. Lincoln claims that cultural pattern dreams are sought, through for example, practices of incubation, and only rarely occur as individual dreams (Lincoln 1935, 22). According to Lincoln, cultural patterns dreams conform to a definite stereotyped pattern laid down by the culture, while the manifest content of individual dreams reflects the culture. Their argument is that cultural pattern dreams only exist when a culture is in full force. External influence, such as colonialisation, leads to a break down of the culture, where by cultural dream symbolism disappears. In these instances, only individual dreams without cultural symbolism are left (Lincoln 1935, 22-23).

it is one of the only outdoor places in Iceland, where anthropologists can "hang out" throughout the year. While an additional benefit was that swimming kept me in shape despite of all the pancakes with cream that I was served, the hotpots in particular gave me the opportunity to listen to and engage in dialogues.

Even though in Reykjavík I had been asked about my perspective to dreams, my own dreams were to a higher degree put into play in the countryside. The requests by others that I include my own dreams in our conversations enhanced my understanding of what Icelandic dream interpretation is about (cf. Tedlock 1991; Perrin 1992, 93-97; Goulet 1994, 23-29; Guédon 1994, 53-56). It was a process of turning from an observer to a participant of some sort (cf. Otto 1997: 101) and provided me with a new role in society. As I also had experienced during my fieldwork in Reykjavík, through my intensive engagement with Icelandic dreams, it became easier to recall my own dreams and my dreams changed subject. The first dreams that I shared with Icelanders--very pleased with myself that I had finally remembered a dream--seemed not to make any sense to them. The images I brought forth had no symbolic value, or did not appear in the right combinations, and people turned silent. As my fieldwork progressed, and I reflected intensively on dreams and their interpretation, also the content of my dreams in the process of recalling changed. One morning, upon awakening, I had the feeling that I had dreamt an Icelandic dream. Perhaps my dream was triggered by the smell which I still associate with my fieldwork in the countryside: a peculiar mixture of cooked rhubarb, pancakes with cream, and cow dung. I had dreamt about a rhubarb plant, which blossomed with white and pink flowers, and I had given the flower to an Asian girl. I was convinced that the structure of my dream narrative and the key images that I remembered would make sense this time. I told my dream to two Icelanders, a woman in her late thirties and a man in his seventies. They skipped the introduction, ignored the Asian girl, but interrupted me as soon as I told them about the white and pink flowers. The woman thought my dream referred to the pregnancy of her sister, and meant that she would give birth to a girl. The man said to me "það kemur í ljós" (it will become clear), hinting that he thought it was I who was pregnant. The sister of the woman gave birth to a little girl and eight years after I had told the man my dream, I became pregnant with a little girl. Piers Vitebsky (2005, 289) noticed, in dream interpretation among the Eveny, that personal narratives are imbued with cultural symbols, and the symbols can easily be adapted to one's own circumstances. This is true also for the Icelandic situation. However, more important is that this example highlights that dreams are not just personal narratives. According to the Icelandic interpretations I encountered, the dream about the rhubarb flower might be about me, but it might also be that my dream is meaningful to another person and has nothing to do with me at all, but with the sister of the woman to whom I told my dream. The social implications of such a relational perspective to dreams (cf. Kirtsoglou 2010), which we meet in many societies around the world, have largely been ignored by anthropolo-

gists, who have worked with the theoretical assumption that dream sharing is about the communication of an intended personal message (cf. Fabian 1966).

Intense exposure to Icelandic ways of dream sharing made me dream twice about events that happened the next day. These rather straightforward dreams that come true the day after the dream has been dreamed are called in Icelandic "*draumar fyrir daglátum*". In the first dream, a young owl was flying towards me and warned me for coming danger. I did not want to listen and tried to push it away. My dream woke me up, partly at least, and the word earthquake forced itself upon me. It appeared to me that the young owl had attempted to warn me about a coming earthquake. For a moment, I doubted whether I should run out of the building or go back to sleep. I chose to go back to sleep, as I was quite tired and not used to taking my dreams for omens. Several hours later, I woke up. The building was shaking. I was experiencing one of the many earthquakes Iceland is known for. I explained my dream by the fact that there could have been small tremors, which I had noticed unconsciously and had caused my dream. I looked for the registration of earthquakes at the time I dreamt my dream that could confirm this, though without result.[14] I told my dream to my Icelandic roommate of that time. Only half awake in the morning, there was no reaction from his side. He only looked at me. When he returned from his classes in the afternoon, he said to me "Do you know that an owl means wisdom?" Owls are not a common Icelandic dream symbol – my dream images were still slightly exotic at that time – but several books with dream symbols and interpretations that many Icelanders store on their bookshelves or in their bedroom, are translations and cover a wealth of "foreign" symbols that may or may not enter Icelandic dream language. An owl was one of them.

Another night I surprised myself by dreaming about standing in a thick layer of human faeces. In contrast to owls, faeces are a common Icelandic dream symbol. Upon awakening, I smiled. Not only because I knew I had dreamt an Icelandic dream (cf. Perrin 1992, 93[15]), as the rhubarb flower dream, but also because I had learned that dreaming about standing in faeces would mean that I would receive money. In the afternoon, I got the message that I had received a research grant. I told my Icelandic friends about my dream and what had happened in waking life, directly after. It was seen as great entertainment.

Even though my omens did not become more sophisticated than this, the intense exposure to a different way of dreaming and interpreting dreams changed

---

14 The reader should note here that I apply Icelandic rhetoric in telling this dream, as illustration. I offer first a (semi)scientific explanatory framework, which, however, does not fully explain the warning of the owl, opening up for the possible explanation that the dream was a premonition, without that I explicitly say so.

15 Perrin writes: "Pararu, 22 septembre 1977. J'emerge d'un cauchemar, oppressé mais heureux. Une fois encore, j'ai "rêvé indien". [Pararu 22 September 1977. I awake from a nightmare, oppressed, but happy. Once again, I have "dreamt Indian" (m.t.)] (Perrin 1992, 93).

not only my own perception but also the content of my dreams and their relatedness with waking life. To explore this further, I interviewed several foreigners who had lived for at least six months in Iceland. Many of them had experienced that their dreams had changed. They had all been told Icelandic dreams and had shared their own dreams with Icelanders. The anthropologists Michel Perrin (1992, 93-97), Jean-Guy Goulet (1994, 23) and Marie Françoise Gúedon (1994, 53-56) have claimed in similar ways that, during long periods of anthropological fieldwork in societies other than their own, they experienced changes to their own ways of dreaming and dream narration (cf. Herdt 1987, 82). These findings demonstrate how cultural dream theories influence not only the ways dreams are narrated, but also the manner in which dreams are experienced and recalled.

As time passed by, my role in the field changed again. My interest in dreams became widely known and people often came to me to tell dreams or addressed the topic when I met them at various localities. At some moment, I was explicitly asked to interpret dreams. Especially in periods when I was home in Denmark, when normal face-to-face dialogues were not possible, I received messages via e-mail, or was called by people who wanted to relate their dreams and hear my opinion. The following example arrived by e-mail:

> Hallo Adriënne!
> Thanks for the letter, nice to hear from you . . . It is very nice to turn dreams over in one's mind, and now I have recently dreamt two strange dreams, which I cannot interpret, but I think they mean something. Perhaps you have an idea, because you have thought so much about dreams. (m.t.)

I recall another event: One of my Icelandic friends called me one evening, and asked me to explain his dream, not only as a "dream specialist", but--as I understood later--also as a woman. The theme of the dream dealt with a woman. I used the knowledge I had gained from what I had heard during my fieldwork, and from my analysis of dream symbols in my collected material. I moved away from a psychoanalytical perspective, where meaning-bearing elements of a dream are interpreted as representations of [parts of] the self and explained the dream from an angle of "disembodiment", a detachment from the dreamer's body, which I found characteristic of Icelandic dream interpretation: A house is a house and not a symbol for the state of the dreamer's body or mind. However, my friend was not satisfied with my explanation. He asked me whether it could be possible that the dream referred to him and the girl personally. My interpretation did not work, because I stuck too much to a static interpretation of dreams, and had not included his personal circumstances, that should have evoked a different dream theory and interpretation (cf. Lohmann 2010). These kinds of situations were extremely instructive.

Another example illuminates my role in the field, and draws attention to the significance of negotiation, in the process of the way in which knowledge is

generated through dreaming and dream sharing. As an anthropologist, I occasionally served as a kind of encyclopaedic reference of Icelandic cultural knowledge. A friend told me of a dream in which a national symbol, the *Fjallkona* ("Mountain Woman"), played an important role. He had made a drawing of his dream, showed it to me, and asked for my opinion. Using my own interpretation of the Fjallkona, based on anthropological studies I had read, I interpreted the Mountain Woman as the symbolic mother of the Icelanders. This symbol was invented during the Icelandic nationalist movement of the nineteenth century (e.g. Björnsdóttir 1989, 107-09). However, according to my friend's interpretation, the Fjallkona was a dangerous and quite disagreeable person. Later on, he visited my (then) boyfriend and me, and we continued discussing the dream. He showed my boyfriend the drawing, and said to him: "She [pointing at me] told me what the Fjallkona really represents. I didn't know. The painting is all wrong. If I had known that before, I never would have given my dream the title Fjallkona. I would have called it 'The sister of the Fjallkona'." This example indicates the necessity of being conscious of our participation as anthropologists, in helping to create what we are studying (cf. Tedlock 1987, 23). This is especially relevant to the field of dream narration, where dreams are in many cases shared between just two persons. On the other hand, I was not the only foreigner bringing in new perspectives. Most Icelanders I have met were very interested in alternative forms of dream interpretation, and bought and borrowed books on dreams, foreign and Icelandic, which provided inspiration for interpreting their dreams.

Figure 3. The Fjallkona of the dreamer and the Fjallkona as a late nineteenth century national symbol. Artist: Helgi Magnússon, based on a description by Eiríkur Magnússon and a sketch by J. Zwecker. Part of the Collection of the National Gallery of Iceland.

Chapter overview

In chapter 1, I present a critical discussion of anthropological theories of dreaming, and develop a social theory of the dream, in which dreaming and dream sharing are not analysed as merely individual or psychological events,

but involve multiple actors. The concept of dream sharing, positioned at the crossroads of cosmology and practice, is central to my argument. Chapter 1 also discusses anthropological debates on cosmology. Moreover, it sets out an argument for a historical perspective, which helps to avoid an analytical angle, whereby dream accounts and the interpretation of dreams are explained as intentional message being wholly responsive to people's current interests.

Chapter 2 demonstrates how significant dreaming and the sharing of dreams have been in Iceland, for revealing the courses of the lives of individuals, and society in general, over a period of a thousand years. Icelanders had already begun to write in their own language in the twelfth century, and the exceptional early literature that is available to us nowadays accounts for more than five hundred and thirty references to dreams. In this chapter, I provide a diachronic analysis of form and the main themes of dream accounts found in various periods, discussing these accounts within the wider context of Icelandic cosmology. While dreams in the Old Norse literature have been a field of extended study, dream accounts from later periods until the present day have received almost no attention. The perspective of *la longue durée* (Braudel 1972),[16] which I present here, enhances the understanding of some of the main features of dream sharing which we encounter in present day Iceland, while it also throws new light on the dream accounts in the Old Norse literature.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are each devoted to beings which appear frequently in both older modern and contemporary dream accounts, namely animals, *huldufólk* ("hidden people"), and the dead. These chapters qualify my argument that the cultural assumption, which ascribes to the activity of dreaming the power to reveal hidden spheres of the waking world, has persisted over many centuries. I address in detail the continuities and discontinuities in the practice of dream sharing, through a discussion of a shift toward increasing nuance. Through a discussion of animal images, chapter 3 provides both an introduction to how Icelandic dream sharing works, and a diachronic analysis of dream accounts in the Old Norse literature and those found in the nineteenth century and

16 Braudel (1972), one of the main representatives of the Annales School, is most known for his perspective of la longue durée. Less known, perhaps, is that la longue durée is only one of the three rhythms of time that Braudel recognised, the other two being la moyenne durée (medium term time) and évènement (event). For Braudel, mentalité (mentalities), belonged to the longue durée, while la moyenne durée, refers to the social history of certain groups over several generations and évènement to the actions of individuals and historical events. His aim was to connect these three rhythms and combine in historical analysis the unique and the particular, with generalisations. Critics of Braudel's work have claimed that he was unsuccessful in this and that Braudel's main contribution has consisted of producing generalisations (Iannone 2002, 72-73). My analysis of Icelandic dream sharing during a thousand years is inspired by Braudel's aim to connect the particular with the general, not through linking mentalité -- here cosmologies-- with historical events and historical persons, but rather by illustrating the interlinkages between cosmologies and agency.

onwards. Chapter 4 takes its point of departure in the ontology, which presupposes the integration of the sphere that dreamers encounter, and the sphere experienced by the waking mind. The chapter compares communication and exchanges between humans and the hidden beings called huldufólk, in dreaming and waking life, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, with communication and exchanges between the two groups in contemporary society. Dream sharing is, in this chapter, addressed as a problem of translation: How do people share the knowledge they have obtained through engagement in the dreaming sphere with others in waking life? And how does this knowledge receive a legitimate status? The topic of chapter 5 is the relationship between the living and the dead in contemporary Iceland, and presents several parallels and analogies with conceptualisations of the dead in folk tales and the Old Norse literature. The main aim of the chapter is to demonstrate how dream sharing is simultaneously supported by and embedded in cosmological conceptualisations, and in shaping persons' lives, and is utilised as a social strategy.

Whereas chapter 5 discusses the partial integration of the other and the self, specifically of the dead and the living, chapter 6 describes the various interactions between the dreaming self and other actors appearing in the dream. It is striking that, according to Icelandic dream interpretation, the identity of each actor is sustained, also in the process of reflection and interpretation of the dream. Previous anthropological studies on dreaming have not sufficiently taken notions of personhood into account.

Anthropological studies that are inspired by psychoanalytical theory interpret the relationship between the dreamer and others in the dream as a process of identity making by the dreamer, through the inclusion of others (cf. Mageo 2003, 10). This chapter seeks to explore dreams, not only in the light of the self, but also of the other. Upon awakening, in Iceland, dreamers may initiate or amend relationships with the people of whom they have dreamt, and know in waking life. Thus, my argument is that a psychologically inspired approach, which views the other as significant to the dreamer's self in identity making, does not fully appreciate the implications of the dream, with regard to the initiation and maintenance of social relations, and, moreover, to the life of the other. Additionally, I question the heuristics of such an approach, which lead to a sharp opposition between dreaming and waking experience, and ignore the need for both experiences to be considered, methodologically and analytically, as complementary.

In the final chapter, I describe how the sharing of dreams discussed in previous chapters relates to other perspectives on dreaming and the dream that exist in contemporary Iceland. In several anthropological studies on dreaming, there has been a quest for the acceptance of the presence of a diversity of dream theories in a single society (Kracke 1979, Tedlock 1987, 25; Crapanzano 2001). Vincent Crapanzano describes this as a "messiness" of the usually conflicting approaches to dreams, which arise from the creative character of the dream experience (Crapanzano 2001, 233). I argue that a messiness of perspectives on

dreaming can, indeed, be traced in Icelandic society, but this messiness is structured in ways that reflects a coexistence of different cosmologies. People are able to live in several "worlds" at the same time (cf. Mol and Law 2002). My detailed analysis shows how the cosmology underlying this understanding of dreams can coexist readily with other modern, post-modern, and Christian cosmologies. I argue that these cosmologies are only partially linked to different domains of Icelandic society (e.g. classes; urban versus rural), but are frequently found in one and the same person. I treat these coexisting cosmologies not so much as ordered according to a historical sequence or developmental spectrum, but as interacting on the basis of their qualitative differences. I also analyse the internal forces of the reproduction of each cosmology, and argue that these forces themselves influence the ways in which they are distributed throughout society.

Chapter 1 Anthropological Approaches to Dreaming

Introduction

References to dreams occur in anthropological literature, but few studies are devoted solely to dreams. Anthropologists who write about dreaming often claim that dreams, as a topic, have intruded upon them, because of the important role they play in the societies where they conducted fieldwork (see, e.g. Tedlock 1987, 23; Jędrej and Shaw 1992, 6-7; Schnepel 2001, 20). The editors of the volumes, *Dreaming. Psychological and Anthropological Interpretations* (Tedlock 1987) and *Dreaming, Religion and Society in Africa* (Jędrej and Shaw 1992), speculate on the reasons that anthropologists have not been keen on dreaming, as a research topic.

Barbara Tedlock seeks to explain this lack of interest in dreaming within the Western cultural heritage of anthropology. Many anthropologists have been raised in Western societies, in which the dichotomy between dreaming or internal subjective reality, and waking or external objective reality is dominant (Tedlock 1987, 2). Tedlock traces this dichotomy to the scholastic heritage of ancient Greek philosophy, stating that Aristotle "dismissed dreams as nothing but mental pictures which, like reflections in water, are not like the real object" (ibid.). Tedlock's statements may create the impression that, already with the ancient Greeks, dreaming had lost its function of providing a gateway to divine worlds. However, Aristotle argued that some dreams have predictive powers. Dreams can indeed be compared with reflections in water, but some people are able to trace the real objects in the reflections (Aristotle 1957, 384-85).

Studies on dreaming and the dream in the Western world--for example, *Dream and Culture. An Anthropological Study of the Western Intellectual Tradition*, by Susan Parman (1991) and *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, by Steven F. Kruger (1992)--indicate that several perspectives to dreams have coexisted in the Western world. The idea that the origins of dreams should be sought in the human mind did not disregard the perspective that dreams were divine messages. Kruger writes of the Middle Ages:

> In Western tradition, discussion of the dream's significance most often involved . . . a consideration of the relations between divinity and humanity. Dreams may be insignificant, arising purely from internal human process; if, however, they are meaningful and revelatory, they provide evidence of gods who meddle in mundane affairs (Kruger 1992, 18).

In the Middle Ages, these two perspectives not only characterised different social groups, but could coexist in the same person, too. Books with lists of dream symbols and their meanings were popular among all strata of society. An

example is *Somniale Danielis*, which was translated into many languages, including Icelandic[1]. Kruger argues:

> The doubleness of attitudes toward dreams cannot simply be attributed to a split between popular and elite culture; it expresses itself instead as simultaneous caution and enthusiasm. The same social groups, even the same individuals, were drawn toward and, at the same time, backed away from a belief in the predictive significance of dreams. (Kruger 1992, 15)

The assumptions that dreams arise from internal human processes, and that the dreamer is situated in an isolated universe, were strengthened during the Enlightenment. René Descartes (1596-1650), who, perhaps paradoxically, found inspiration in his dreams, placed dreams within the realm of fantasy and irrational experience (Tedlock 1987, 2). He argued that only conscious thought could provide true ideas. Because dreaming is not a conscious process, dreams should be rejected as sources of knowledge (Parman 1991, 82-84). In Descartes' reflections, theology became separated from science, as Parman notes:

> Descartes began a systematic examination of the basis of his belief that something was true. Because dreams, sensory illusions, and false memories can appear to be true but are false, he concluded that all beliefs about the self and the world are suspect. Only the act of doubt itself is certain. To doubt is to think; to think is to exist. By an act of doubt, one constructs the external world.
>
> Although the ability to doubt and to think comes from God, and the world of thought corresponds to the real world only because of the veracity of God, Descartes has taken the proof of reality out of God's hand and into a method of thinking . . . The Admirable Science has become Science as we think about it today. (Parman 1991, 85)

By classifying dreams as false and science as true, science and dreams became opposed, as they are still regarded in many contemporary Western societies. The Dutch expression: "Dromen zijn bedrog" ("dreams are deceptions") is only one example of this dominant point of view.

In the introduction to the volume *Dreaming, Religion and Society in Africa*, M.C. Jędrej and Rosalind Shaw also speculate on the lack of interest in dreams on the part of anthropologists, specifically British social anthropologists studying African culture. They conclude that, owing to the cultural background of the early anthropologists, and influenced by the studies of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, dreams were classified as significant to the individual. As such, dreams

---

1 For a discussion of the Icelandic translation of *Somniale Danielis*, see Turville-Petre, 1967.

were considered a topic for psychologists, not for British social anthropologists. Where American anthropologists explored the borderland between their discipline and psychology, British social anthropologists of the 1940s and 1950s tried to avoid themes that seemed to belong to the field of psychoanalysis (Jędrej and Shaw 1992, 3-4). The Western idea that dreams are creations of an individual mind, and belong to the realm of psychological processes, misled anthropologists, who rejected the possibility that dreams could be a fruitful subject of anthropological investigation. Perhaps it is possible to say that the methodological problems implicit in an anthropological study of dreams were taken too seriously. Dream experiences cannot be observed; the anthropologist is dependent on what people say, and not what they do, and in many societies, dreams are narrated in private spheres, difficult to access.

Despite the lack of primary anthropological attention to dreams, the fact that the subject of dreaming has necessarily drawn the attention of several anthropologists makes it possible to give a theoretical outline of what one could call a history of the anthropology of dreaming.

An evolutionary perspective

Dreams had already received attention from early anthropologists, such as Edward Tylor. Tylor was interested in the origins of religion, and found the following quote of J.L. Wilson instructive, for his theory on primitive religion. Wilson wrote about "the Negroes in South Guinea":

> All their dreams are construed into visits from the spirits of their deceased friends . . . their sleeping hours are characterised by almost as much intercourse with the dead as their wakening are with the living. This is, no doubt, one of the reasons of their excessive superstitiousness. Their imaginations become so lively that they can scarcely distinguish between their dreams and their waking thoughts, between the real and the ideal, and they consequently utter falsehood without intending, and profess to see things which never existed (Wilson in Tylor 1891, 443-44).

For Wilson and Tylor, the fact that "the Negroes of South Guinea" did not make a distinction between the subjective experience of dreaming and the objective experience of waking was a sign of their primitivism. At the same time, their dream theory pointed towards an origin of ideas of soul and spirits. The "primitives" asked themselves what those human shapes could be that appeared in dreams and visions; they concluded that they were disembodied spirits, entities that remained alive after death (Tylor 1891, 428-29, 443). Tylor thus placed the experience of dreaming at the basis of the development of religion.

James Frazer adopted some of Tylor's ideas, and wrote in his work, *The Golden Bough*:

> The soul of a sleeper is supposed to wander away from his body and actually to visit the places, to see the persons, and to perform the acts of which he dreams . . . The Indians of the Gran Chaco are often heard to relate the most incredible stories as things which they have themselves seen and heard . . . the Indians are firmly convinced of the truth of what they relate; for these wonderful adventures are simply their dreams, which they do not distinguish from waking realities. (Frazer 1993, 181)

The Victorian anthropologists claimed that the "primitives" could not help uttering falsehoods when they talked about their dreams as real experiences. This was simply because they were incapable of distinguishing between the "reality" of waking life and the "illusion" of dreaming life. These early anthropological studies on dreaming assumed a fundamental distinction between the Western and non-Western mind, and contributed to the division of the anthropological universe in Western and non-Western societies (cf. Broch 1998, 8).

Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud's work on dreams, which dates from the beginning of the twentieth century, stresses universal aspects of dreaming. Central to Freud's work is that, through the narration of manifest dreams and through association, the latent dream that originates from repressed wishes becomes revealed (Freud 1961). Freud's idea that the underlying processes of dreaming were a universal aspect of mankind, was gratefully adopted by several anthropologists. Charles G. Seligman, for example, who was inspired by both Freud and Jung, concludes that: "The essential dream mechanisms of non-Europeans, including savage and barbaric peoples, appear to be the same as in ourselves" (Seligman 1924, 46). While other British anthropologists rejected dreams as a potential subject for anthropological study on the grounds that they belonged to the private domain,[2] American anthropologists illustrated, mainly through content analysis, the underlying universal processes of dreaming, and sought to explore possible links between dreams and the influence of culture on personhood. Dorothy Eggan (1952), for example, argues that the study of dreams has an important methodological value. She notices that discussing dreams with informants can lead to the discovery of issues too sensitive to utter directly. Eggan states that dreams give insight into the discrepancy between "the cultural ideal and the functional facts of a culture" (Eggan 1952, 468). Content analysis is a way to visualize this discrepancy, because "cultural stresses, as well as cultural supports, are easily seen in an arrangement of this sort by reason of element frequency and the consistency with which these appear in combination with other elements" (ibid., 484).

2 Edmund Leach stated, for example, that dreams generate private symbols (Leach 1976, 11).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the search for universal aspects of dreams continued. The work of Roy D'Andrade is an example of this. He argues that some evidence exists that symbolism in dreams is a universal phenomenon (D'Andrade 1961, 327). D'Andrade tries to be careful when comparing the meaning of Western symbols with those of dream symbols in other societies. He looks for universal symbols, by comparing interpretations based on the symbolism found in the dreams of non-Western informants with independently collected historical material. He used the work of John J. Honigman (1954) to illustrate his point:

> It has been suggested that in dreams protrusions symbolize the male sex organ and the male's normally assertive role in copulation. Aware of this clinically derived interpretation, we implicitly predicted sexual inadequacy or impotence for a young Kaska man who reported a dream in which he was attacked by a grizzly bear. "My gun sticks. I get nervous. I try to take shot at him. My gun got no power. Goes ssssss --goes out quick." When interviewed, the informant rejected the interpretation of equating gun and penis. Our prediction was nevertheless confirmed when on two subsequent occasions, according to reliable testimony, the informant experienced acute impotence. (Honigman in D'Andrade 1961, 300)

It might be obvious that this type of reasoning might be questioned. The researcher enters the field with an ethnocentric model in mind, seeking to confirm, and not to disprove it. Two events, the dream narration and the acute impotence, are related, while there need not be any correlation. Moreover, this approach ignores local dream theory, and the social context in which the dream is evoked and communicated.

Thomas Gregor also finds inspiration in the work of Freud, when he undertakes the task of studying the dreams of the Mehinaku of Brazil. For Gregor, dreams are projections of wishes and concerns (Gregor 1985, 153). He argues, as Eggan does, that a study of dreams can provide insight into the constraints and problems with which individuals are confronted, as members of a society (ibid., 9). Gregor's study is, in my opinion, illustrative of the general problem with Freudian-inspired anthropological studies. They do insufficient justice to cultural diversity and the influence of social practice and cosmology on the dream experience, and the recollection of the dream. By ignoring the contexts in which dreams are retold to others and the shared body of knowledge that serves as the basis for these dialogues, such studies exclude a dream's potential variety of meaning.

Michel Foucault, too, criticizes Freud's work, in *Dream, Imagination and Existence*, of 1954, which is an introduction to the study, *Dream and Existence*, written by Swiss psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger, in 1930. Foucault states that Freud does not go beyond the nineteenth century psychological postulate that a dream is a rhapsody of images. If the dream was only a rhapsody of images,

Foucault says, it would be exhausted by a psychological analysis. He praises Binswanger for having returned to the pre-Freudian perspective, which posed the problem of dreams in epistemological terms. Foucault claims that the dream is an imaginary experience, in fact at the very origin of imagination, and because it relates to a theory of knowledge, the dream experience cannot be reconstituted by psychological analysis (Foucault 1986, 43-45).

In a study of the role of dream narrations in the Jamaa movement in Zaire, Johannes Fabian notes another weak point in a Freudian-inspired anthropological perspective on dreams (Fabian 1966, 559): Freud sees the dream narrative as a poor reduction of the dream itself. By using the technique of free association, the more significant latent dream can be unravelled. To the Jamaa Movement, the actual dream experience is of little interest. It is important that certain genres of dreams are able to legitimise the dreamer's use of a set of signs as a means of communication. The question of whether the narrator really has dreamt what he or she tells the public need not necessarily be of any significance, because the message in the dream narration is more important than the dream experience itself (ibid., 559-60). Fabian's communicative theory of dreams in which dreams are viewed as cultural messages rejects the idea that dreams are not a suitable subject for anthropological research, by shifting the focus from latent dreams to the sharing of dreams. Even though, I think that Fabian takes the argument of dream sharing as a strategy too far, his inclusion of power in his analysis of dream narration is important.

Dissolving the boundaries between anthropology and psychology

Although a movement away from content analysis and Freudian-inspired theories of dreaming can be traced in more recent anthropological works, psychology is not discarded. On the contrary, recent studies, mainly representing the American tradition of cultural anthropology, are characterised by the attempt to break down the border between psychology, with its working field of "the personal", and anthropology, with its subject of "the social". In *Dreaming. Psychological and anthropological interpretations* (1987), Tedlock criticizes Fabian's assertion that "psychology is concerned with dreams as internal experiences, reflections of the subconscious, whereas dreams as intentional messages, i.e. culturally defined means of communication, are the domain of anthropology" (Fabian 1966, 560). Although Tedlock agrees with the importance of conceiving dreams as messages, she argues that a sharp division between psychology and anthropology "would leave psychologists free to ignore the fact that their study of the dreaming experience is partially dependent on their subject's communication of such experiences by culturally determined means, and it would leave anthropologists free to ignore the fact that dream communication in other cultures is partially dependent on native theories about the dream experience" (Tedlock 1987, 22). Reducing dreams to intentional messages again leads

to an explanation of dreams in terms of their content. Tedlock (1987, 1991)[3] argues instead for a theory of dreaming that views dream narration and interpretation as psychodynamic intercultural social processes.

Tedlock and the other authors of the volume *Dreaming. Psychological and Anthropological Interpretations* see the concept of self as an important theme in research on dreaming, because it has the potential to overcome the sharp division between the anthropological and psychological fields (Tedlock 1987, 26). Dreams are indeed frequently studied by American anthropologists, in relation to the construction of the self (see, for example, Basso 1987; Herdt 1987; Ewing 1990; Reynolds 1992; Graham 1994, 2000; Stephen 1995; Stewart 1997). These studies mainly address the relationships between individual subjectivity, actual dream experience, and dream narration as public performance (Graham 2000, 62). The narration of dreams is still seen as an attempt to deal with and resolve conflicts, not perhaps the conflict between the cultural ideal and the functional facts of a culture, as Eggan expressed it, but rather, between the cultural concept of the self and the actual experience of the self (Ewing 1990, 69).

Tedlock's view has methodological consequences in that she does not propose to collect isolated dream accounts, but rather to rely on participant observation to capture dream narration in its "natural communicative context" (Tedlock 1991). Additionally, Tedlock points out that it might be valuable for anthropologists to narrate their own dreams in the field.

Another recent attempt to overcome the division between the Western discourse that describes dreaming as a psychological phenomenon, and the relativistic appreciations made by anthropologists, that dreaming is influenced by culture, is that of David Riches (1995). Riches' aim is to establish a theory of dreaming that holds cross-culturally (Riches 1995, 101). He looks for aspects of dreaming that are universally valid, and finds two: human beings everywhere distinguish between being awake and being asleep on the basis of differences in behaviour, namely, mobility versus long-term immobility. Upon waking, people experience a perception of qualitative change that is regarded as being outside their control. Riches concludes "that 'dreaming' is the stipulation, in this-world-reality,[4] of (an)other reality associated with sleep", and dreams are the particular imagery of this cross-reality experience (ibid., 103).

While Riches, Binswanger, and Foucault in particular, in his discussion of Binswanger's work, postulate that the pathways of perception are not closed during dreaming, the authors do assume that the dreaming mind finds itself in an isolated world (Riches 1995 and Foucault 1986, 51). Foucault writes of Binswanger's work: "Is it not a gamble . . . to want to circumscribe the positive

---

3 Online document, therefore no page numbers: http://www.asdreams.org/journal/articles/1-2tedlock1991.htm, consulted 11 February 2011.

4 Riches describes "this-world-reality" as the reality the reader experiences while reading Riches' article (Riches 1995, 102).

content of *Existenz* by reference to a mode [a mode of being of the dream] in which it is least engaged in the world?" (Foucault 1986, 33). Waud Kracke describes this somewhat differently and argues that the dreaming experience does not differ from waking experience. He claims that the dream is just the ultimate evidence that we are always alone in our experience of the world (Kracke 2003a). Interestingly, the same postulate, that waking and dreaming experience are of a similar kind, has been used in recent anthropological work, to pursue the opposite argument. Supported by cognitive studies, which demonstrate that dreaming is not limited to REM sleep, and that dreamers employ the same systems of mental representation and processing as people who are awake (Cavallero and Foulkes 1993, 133), Rane Willerslev argues that humans never find themselves in an "empty reality", in which all social engagement is suspended. He refers to his fieldwork among the Siberian Yukaghir, who start from the assumption that the mind always subsists in the very engagement of the person in the world, quite independently of whether the person is asleep or awake. Following Heidegger's notion of *dasein*, Willerslev concludes that humans are always immersed in the world (Willerslev 2004, 412). The former opposition between the widely accepted Western statement, that dreams are creations of the human mind, and that dreaming reflects a state of social inertness, and the indigenous construction, that dreaming provides a way of revealing knowledge of the world is not overcome, but inverted in Willerslev's work. According to Willerslev, the Western perspective to dreams, with Freud as its main inspirer, is now the construction, while the "natives" are right; the dreaming experience as an isolated world does not exist. The division of the world into Western and non-Western societies, which Broch detected in early anthropological studies on dreaming (Broch 1998, 8), is in this way reproduced.

Dream narration, performance, and power

Many studies, particularly those influenced by the tradition of British social anthropology, have the concept of "dream", and not "dreaming", as the point of entry. Central to these works is dream narration, which is often discussed in the context of social action and power. For example, one way of approaching dreams is to investigate how dreams are used to construct acceptable accounts of extraordinary and unintelligible actions (Jędrej and Shaw 1992, 8). Jędrej and Shaw, following C. Wright Mills (1940), start from the concept of "vocabularies of motives", in their development of an anthropological theory of dreaming. These are "accepted and shared sets of terms which constitute the explanations people use to account for their actions" (ibid.).

These vocabularies may be used for obtaining positions in society, as Fabian has demonstrated for the Jamaa movement (Fabian 1966), and Katherine Ewing for Pakistani Sufis. Ewing has described how dreams with a specific pattern are considered to be a sign that a *pīr*, a sufi spiritual guide and healer, spiritually requests the dreamer to become a disciple (Ewing 1990). But dreams not only motivate role-taking; they can also be a source of self-transformation (ibid.) and

identity-formation (Graham 1994). Laura Graham has observed how young men among the Xavante of Brazil express their dreams in song and dance for a wider public. She sees this as an event whereby individual experience is merged with collective experience, helping the young men in shaping their identities. This performance is, however, inaccessible to women (Graham 1994; 1995). Power is an important aspect of dream narration and interpretation. In some societies, the access to certain kinds of dreams, or to the interpretation of dreams in general, is placed in the hands of only a few. Other people may be restrained from using the knowledge that dream imagery and interpretation might generate. For example, Pamela Reynolds has described the restrictions sometimes placed upon Zezuru children's access to dreams sent from the dead (Reynolds 1992, 27-31). Other examples are societies in which psychologists have gained the right to find the hidden meaning of dreams, thereby gaining control over the dreamer in an attempt to (re)construct the dreamer's self.

With the increasing focus on agency and the process of sharing dreams in recent years, a performative approach is only a minor step. Here, the focus is on the expressive side of dream sharing, which Laura Graham defines as: "the activity by which dream experiences are externalised and socialised, through, for example, narration, song and dance in a specific social setting" (Graham 1995, 2000). Thus, the act of sharing is perceived as a kind of dream theatre, and a central question is, to paraphrase Burkhard Schnepel: "Welche Aufführungsstrategien, welche Rollen usw. gibt es im Traumentheater?" (Which performance strategies, which roles, etc. are present in the dream theatre?) (Schnepel 2001, 19). According to Schnepel, independently of whether we are dealing with a shamanic, prophetic, or psychotherapeutic setting, it is the performance that makes the dream work (ibid.).

In 2008, Iain Edgar and I convened a workshop at the 10th EASA biennial conference in Ljubljana on the anthropology of dreaming and, more specifically, on the mutual influence of dreaming and waking life. A collection of selected papers, presented at this workshop, and an additional paper on the role of dreams in Greece was published in a special issue of *History and Anthropology* (2010). The papers demonstrate clearly novel directions in anthropological theory of dreaming. While anthropologists in most of the works discussed in this chapter applied a clear distinction between the dream experience as inaccessible private mental experience and the dream report as public social performance (see, for example, Tedlock 1991; Graham 1995; Edgar 1999), the papers in our volume highlight the interrelationship between dreaming and waking life. Lohmann (2010, 246), for example, finds continuity between dreaming and waking experiences in the fact that we experience in dreams many of the same people, places and things that inhabit our waking lives. On this basis, he suggests that an event in a dream, such as the death of a loved one, almost automatically leads to the concern whether this could also happen in waking life. It is, though, especially in Kirtsoglou's article (2010) that we see the first building blocks of a truly social theory of dreaming. While discussing dream experiences and narra-

tives as sites of creativity and agency in the ethnographic context of Greek society, Kirtsoglou proposes that if our waking thoughts are social thoughts, sleeping thoughts should be social too. Linking dreaming to a theory of the self, she makes the important point that when the waking Greek person is a multiply constructed agent composed of diverse relationships, there is no reason to think that Greek would experience events as a single, isolated individual in their dreaming lives (Kirtsoglou 2010, 324-326). The implications of such a view are far-reaching. As I will demonstrate throughout this book, a social theory of dreaming is based on the recognition that cultural notions of personhood, shared knowledge and experiences are present as buildingstones in our dreams, shaping the experience of our dreams, the process of recall upon awakening and the ways dreams are narrated, interpreted and acted upon. In societies where personhood is experienced as relational, the dreamer is considered not to be alone in the dream, nor is the dream seen as an individual creation of the dreamer (cf. Glaskin 2010, Kirtsoglou 2010).

In Iceland, the relational notion of personhood means that the involvement of others in the dream is taken seriously. In those cases, the dream is considered to have a meaning for these persons and not necessarily for the dreamer. The dreamer may, upon awakening, pick up the telephone to call the persons he or she has met or observed while dreaming and ask how they are doing. An epistemology that explains how people can appear in dreams of others, while being unaware of this in waking life, is lacking in Iceland – as in most societies where we find similar ideas and practices. Yet it is accepted by many Icelanders that they appear in the dreams of others and that those dreams can reveal important information about their lives. As it happened in the village of Flúðir, where it was common knowledge that a certain man dreamt dreams that often referred to coming events in the lives of other inhabitants of the area, for example, pregnancy, illness or family problems.

From a waking perspective, in Iceland, social engagement in the construction of a meaning of a dream starts already while observing the sleeper's behaviour. Unrest would often mean a difficult dream, pointing to negative (coming) events in waking life. Dreams may be told directly upon awakening, listened to or become subject of interpretation, often through the negotiation of meaning. Dreams may also be retold by others and become shaped in the process of repeated narration, integrating continuously elements of waking life, until waking life corresponds with the dream and the dream has come true. Also, the same kind of dreams may be dreamed by several persons, pointing to an emerging event, perhaps afflicting the whole society. And even when dreams are not narrated to others, they may leave imprints on everyday life when the dreamer chooses to act upon the dream in waking life.

Dream sharing and cosmology

Central to my social theory of dreaming is the concept of dream sharing. As I mentioned in the introduction, Jędrei and Shaw (1992) lay out their use of the

concept of dream sharing in the light of their theoretical argument that power is viewed as inseparable from ontology. Finding inspiration in Foucault's concept "technologies of the self", Jędrei and Shaw criticise the dichotomy that is evoked in many studies on dreaming between the passiveness of dream experiences and the agency characterised by the waking condition (Jędrei and Shaw 1992, 12) I have put forward in the introduction that this theoretical point is supported by both ethnographic and linguistic evidence.

Another important point that I adopt from Jędrei and Shaw (1992) and further develop is that sharing a dream might be a strategy for self-advancement but it is also a practice in which cosmologies are manifested and generated. Following Andreas Roepstorff's definition of the concept of cosmology as a conceptualisation of what is out there (an ontology), a method for validating and examining it (an epistemology), and a prescription for how people should, ideally, relate to it (an ethics) (Roepstorff 2003, 117), I develop the argument that dream sharing is situated at the cross roads of cosmology and practice. The concept of cosmology (or world view, paradigm, *Weltmodell*, or *Weltanschauung*) has been criticised for being an analytical model imposed by anthropologists, which is separated from social action and what the world really is: "a life world, where people live in and not on" (Ingold 2000, 14-15). This criticism is directed at a definition of Weltanschauung, in which the concept of agency has no room, as, for example, is found in the classical anthropological work of Bronislaw Malinowski. He writes:

> What interests me really in the study of the native is his outlook on things, his Weltanschauung, the breath of life and reality which he breathes and by which he lives. Every human culture gives its members a definite vision of the world, a definite zest of life (Malinowski 1987, 517).

The criticism addresses the "definite zest of life" ascribed to Weltanschauung; the assumption that it is a bounded entity that lends coherence and meaning to "a culture", and steers social action and conceptual thinking, without any space for creativity. This resembles some of the criticism that the concept of culture has received recently. I argue that the concept of cosmology is a useful analytical tool (cf. Herzfeld 2001, 192-216) when emphasizing the interaction between cosmology and practice. Roepstorff's definition responds to this focus, because it implies that cosmology does not only deal with structures that are isolated from, and at the same time imposed upon, individuals, but centers on relations between the self and objects, phenomena, and beings existing in the world.

Another important insight is that a cosmology does not have to be a well-integrated, internally-consistent system composed exclusively of mutually compatible forms of speculation, assumption, and knowledge, in order to be viable. As Erich Kolig puts it: "The praxis of human cognition demonstrates beyond doubt that people can live with quite a few logically irreconcilable inconsisten-

cies without obvious ill effects or without resulting immediately in the struggle to overcome such contradictions" (Kolig 1989, 103). Or, in the words of Michael Herzfeld: ". . . cosmologies must always account for the failures in the systems they describe, and . . . this leads to much more complex ambiguities than can be described by simple structural schemata" (Herzfeld 2001, 205).

One point which I adopt from Fredrik Barth is that variation should emerge as a necessity of anthropological analysis (Barth 1993, 3-4). If cosmology is conceptualised as a web instead of a bounded entity, as Barth suggests (1987), attention is drawn, not to the question how different cosmologies clash, as in many anthropological studies, but *also* to their relations of interaction, interdependence, and avoidance. It is here that the diversity of social life can be approached and understood. For example, at the beginning of this chapter, I referred to the work of Kruger (1992), to demonstrate that often there is not one single, systematic theory of the dream in a society (cf. Crapanzano 2001, 232 and Lohmann 2010). The same social groups, or even the same individuals, may apply different, even contradictory, methods of interpreting dreams. The idea that dreams arise from internal human processes may be abandoned in the next moment, when dream images provide evidence of gods who meddle in mundane affairs (Kruger 1992, 18). This is exactly what happens in contemporary Iceland, as I will demonstrate in the next chapters.

Vincent Crapanzano uses the word "messiness", when he refers to several coexisting approaches to the dream in a single society (Crapanzano 2001, 233). Crapanzano suggests that this messiness is a response to the creative force of dream experiences, but also to the tendency of the dream to encourage its own decontextualisation, or, it might be better to say, its own special contextualisation (ibid., 234). In contrast to Crapanzano, and Lohmann, whose work I discussed in my introduction, I view the inherent link between dream sharing and cosmology as putting constraints on the number of dream theories that are generated by a single society. The creative input derived from personal experiences, such as dream experiences, and from daily life as it unfolds, interacts with cosmological assumptions and a shared body of knowledge. Ignoring the restraints that cosmologies put on social action and conceptual thinking, and overestimating the role of agency, can easily lead to analyses in which social action is interpreted solely in the light of social strategies and personal benefit.

Herzfeld struggles with this prominent role of agency, when he discusses the concept of cosmology in his book, *Anthropology. Theoretical Practice in Culture and Society*. He writes: ". . . once we recognize the role of choice and agency, cosmology no longer serves as the determinant of action, but instead as a rich source of imagery and argumentation that individuals and groups can creatively mine as they search for explanations and justifications of their activities" (Herzfeld 2001, 193). A few pages later he states: "The extent to which cosmology appears to determine action may in fact prove a valuable source of insight into the hegemonic processes whereby consciousness can be regimented

to serve colonizing regimes of truth--processes that have often recurred in human society" (ibid., 215).

Icelandic dream sharing cannot be completely explained with regard to its functions, such as legitimizing powerful positions in a society, negotiating identity, or constructing acceptable accounts for social actions. I argue for an approach that combines cosmology and social strategy, elaborating on the previously discussed work of Jędrei and Shaw (1992, 12-13).

My theoretical approach, which situates dream sharing between cosmology and practice, includes a historical perspective, which is based on two arguments. First, the above-mentioned movement away from the definition of cosmology as a static, bounded entity imposed on members of a society, implies an approach that acknowledges the possibility that cosmologies can coexist, change, and have a history that needs to be traced. Secondly, I argue, in line with Tim Ingold (1996, 202), that the past is something distant from present experience and which can be consciously recollected, but at the same time the past is generative of life, as it exists here and now.

Chapter 2 A Thousand Years of Dreaming in Iceland

Introduction

The inclusion of historical and literary sources in my research is linked to the argument I presented in the previous chapter, that not only is history constructed in the present, but the past is generative of life, as it is with us here and now (Ingold 1996, 202). An investigation of dream sharing in the Icelandic past helps to explain Icelandic dream sharing in the present, because modern practice is shaped by its history, although not necessarily in a homogenous manner, or along an identifiable continuum. However, there is another reason that I have embarked upon a study of historical sources. Icelanders display what has been called a "bookish approach" towards their society, identity, and history (Pálsson 1995, 20). Gísli Pálsson has described this approach in the context of Icelandic language policy in the following way: "Language tends to be treated as a sovereign 'thing', a collective institution independent of and above those who speak it who are reduced to mere instruments of language" (Pálsson 1995, 20). In a similar way, written sources are sometimes ascribed a life independent of their creators. Icelanders might, therefore, consider the Old Norse literature, which is compulsory at school, and found on many Icelanders' bookshelves (although this does not guarantee that the works are read), as representing an objective reality and an essence of "Icelandicness".

This conceptualisation of language was strengthened during a national romantic movement in the nineteenth century. The movement promoted the idea of literature as storehouse of culture, and turned literature and language into the foundation stones of Icelandic national identity. Old Norse sources were seen as providing a gateway to the pure Icelandic culture ascribed to the so-called Commonwealth Period, marked by the year 930 AD, when the *Alþing*, Iceland's national assembly, was established, and ending in 1262, when the Icelanders swore allegiance to the Norwegian King, and thus lost their independence. The consequence of the Icelanders' "bookish approach" to dream sharing is that the dream accounts found in the literary sources are taken seriously, in the sense that they are assumed to reflect an Icelandic capacity of being *berdreyminn* (able to dream revealing dreams). The influence of Old Norse literature can still be traced in modern and contemporary dream accounts, but, above all, it may legitimize the sharing of dreams.

While it is not unusual for anthropologists to compose their ethnography from highly diverse sources, including novels, poems, photographs, and historical records, it is rather uncommon to analyse a practice throughout a period of a thousand years. In various ways, anthropologists working with Iceland, who were likewise attracted to the immense richness of the historical material, have paved the way. Kirsten Hastrup has skilfully analysed the mentality and the nature of social relationships in Icelandic society throughout a period of a thousand years, working with demarcated periods (Hastrup 1985, 1990a and 1990b, 1998). Other anthropologists, such as Turner (1971), Durrenberger (1984, 1987,

1988, 1989, 1990, 1992) and Pálsson (1992, 1995) have primarily addressed Iceland's Commonwealth. Within the field of literature studies, scholars have generally worked from two oppositional standpoints. They have either viewed the saga literature as works of fiction, or postulated that the literature, as oral tradition, is an important source for reconstructing the history and ethnography of early Iceland. Literary scholars, like Guðrún Nordal (1998, 21-22), have credited anthropologists for pointing out that a key to understanding the historical texts is to link behaviour to the social position of individuals within family and political networks. Nevertheless, Nordal also criticizes anthropologists for an uncritical use of the sources, and not distinguishing between the Icelandic Family Sagas, which she describes as literary compositions, and literary historical documents such as the contemporary Íslendingasaga.

While Guðrún Nordal's (e.g. 2006) contribution to Icelandic studies is impressive, my inclusion of various literary sources is based on my interest for the manner in which dream accounts manifest themselves, pointing to ideas about body and soul, life and death, as well as to the various ways in which dreams are narrated and receive a meaning (cf. Odner 1974). This is in line with Gísli Pálsson's arguments (1995, 80) that even "while the [saga] authors may have depended extensively on foreign texts and rhetoric, sometimes producing mere translations of European texts, their works must somehow mirror their own needs and circumstances and, therefore, the reality of early Iceland."

This chapter will make the following points: First, the aim is to prove my argument that the sharing of dreams has been a significant part of Icelandic everyday life, probably ever since the country was settled, up to the present day; second, to illustrate the main features of dream accounts over time, and the ways they are embedded in cosmologies (I discuss dream accounts in conjunction with the important concept of fate, and various ideas of the "soul"[1] and its relation to the body); third, to present a diachronic analysis of the main features of a few selected dream accounts from different periods, in order to point out new and persistent elements in form, structure, and content. Even though continuity in the practice of dream narration and interpretation can be traced over a millennium, the context in which dreams are communicated, the content which people consider worth communicating, and the form and meaning of dreams have changed. Such an analysis contributes to a better understanding of some of the features appearing in modern dream accounts, but also sheds new light on the older and frequently discussed literature. Fourth, to engage critically with the work conducted on the Old Norse dream accounts[2] and finally, to provide a

1 "Soul" is put in quotation marks to emphasize that we are not dealing with a Christian concept of the soul.

2 In contrast to the dearth of studies of dream accounts found in the Icelandic material from the fifteenth century up to the present day, dreams in the Old Norse literature have been subjected to extensive study (e.g., see Henzen 1890; Larsen 1917; Haeckel 1934; Kelchner 1935; Sluijter 1936; Turville-Petre 1966 and 1967; Schach 1971; Glend-

short overview of dream accounts in the less-known material dating from the fifteenth century. The literature from the fifteenth century and onwards has received little consideration, and is often described as poor, when compared to the literature written during Iceland's Commonwealth period. However, interesting references to dreams are found in this period.

From oral poetry to written text: from the tenth to the fifteenth century

The earliest literature in which dream accounts appear are *Eddukvæði* ("the Poetic Edda" or *Sæmundar Edda*), a collection of heroic and mythological poems. The *Konungsbók Eddukvæða* (*Codex Regius*) is the main manuscript in which the poems are recorded. This manuscript was written around 1270, but some of the poems, anonymously transmitted, had already been written down in the twelfth century, and all the poems are believed to have their roots in older oral poetry (Gunnell 2005, 82-83). Terry Gunnell reminds us that *Eddukvæði* consists of twenty-nine poetic works of various forms and styles, and should be seen as a thematic collection, rather than as one manuscript (ibid., 82-83). All works provide an insight into the mythological and heroic world of early Iceland and Scandinavia.

In the poems, dreams appear as important sources of knowledge of unfolding of events. The concept of fate is central here, as, for example, in the text "Baldurs draumar" ("The Dreams of Baldur"). Although "Baldurs draumar" is not found in the *Codex Regius*, but in the manuscript, *AM 748*^{4to}, it resembles the famous "Völuspá" ("The Seeress' Prophecy"), the first poem in the *Codex Regius*, and is recognised as part of *Eddukvæði*. The dreams of Baldur, son of Óðinn, are not listed in detail in the text; there is only a reference to the fact that Baldur had disturbing dreams. The narrative context, however, illustrated here by stanzas one, two, four, and five, reveals the ways dreams were valued and used:

1.Senn voru æsir
allir á þingi
og ásynjur
allar á máli,
og um það réðu
ríkir tívar,
hví væri Baldri
ballir draumar.

---

inning 1973-1974 and 1974; Miller 1986; Lönnroth 2002 and 2006; Nordal 2006; Helgadóttir 2006)

2. Upp reis Óðinn,
aldinn Gautur,
og hann á Sleipni
söðul um lagði,
reið hann niður þaðan
Niflheljar til,
mætti hann hvelpi,
þeim er úr helju kom.

4. Þá reið Óðinn
fyrir austan dyr,
þar er hann vissi
völu leiði,
nam hann vittugri
valgaldur kveða,
uns nauðig reis,
nás orð um kvað:

5. Hvað er manna það
mér ókunnra,
er mér hefir aukið
erfitt sinni?
Var eg snivin snjóvi
og slegin regni
og drifin döggu,
dauð var eg lengi.
(Eddukvæði 1998, 380-81)

[1.All together the Æsir
came in council
and all the Asynior
to speak together
and what they talked of,
those powerful gods,
was why Baldr
was having sinister dreams.

2.Up rose Odin,
the sacrifice for men,
and on Sleipnir
he laid a saddle;
down he rode
to Mist-hell

there he met a dog
coming from hell.

4.Then Odin rode
by the eastern doors,
Where he knew
the seeress' grave to be;
He began to speak
a corpse-reviving spell for the wise woman
Until reluctantly she rose,
Spoke these corpse-words:

5. "Which man is that,
unknown to me,
who is making me
travel this difficult road?
I was snowed upon,
I was rained upon,
Dew fell on me,
dead I've been for a long time."
(The Poetic Edda 1996, 243)]

The first stanza tells of the gathering of the Æsir, the gods, who want to know why Baldur is having sinister dreams. Disturbing dreams or restless sleep ("lætr illa í svefni")[3] figure frequently in Old Norse literature, but also in the later folk tales and modern dream accounts. These conditions are considered indications that the dreamer has crossed temporal and spatial boundaries, and is engaging with the actors and events appearing in the dream sphere. This active engagement in the dream, which is expressed physically, is a sign that the dream is important for disclosing the course of events in waking life. Restless sleep and disturbing dreams often indicate coming difficulties and danger in waking life. The correct interpretation of the sinister dreams of Baldur is, therefore, a delicate matter, and we see in the poem that, after the gods have tried jointly, and in vain, to find an explanation, help is sought from a seeress, who belongs to Hell, the realm of the dead. Óðinn, the ruler of the gods, takes it upon himself to ride to Hell on his eight-legged horse, Sleipnir, and awaken the seeress, who has been dead for a long time. In the dialogue which unfolds between the *völva* and Óðinn, and follows the above-mentioned introductory stanzas, the course of

3 Compare the suggestion of David Riches that humans everywhere distinguish between being awake and being asleep on the basis of differences in behaviour: namely, mobility versus long-term immobility (Riches 1995, 103). Movement in sleep is, according to the Icelandic dream theory presented here, a reflection of the mobility or engagement of the dreamer in spheres that are hidden in waking life.

events is revealed: Through the intervention of Loki, son of a giant and foster-brother to Óðinn, who has the role of trickster in the mythological texts, Baldur will die by the hand of his brother, Hörðr. This event will lead to *Ragnarök*, the end of the world. Baldur will be revived and the world reborn, although with another social structure and different actors. The rebirth of the world also includes elements which might point to a new phase of deconstruction.[4]

Thus, Baldur's disturbing dreams are part of the myth which deals with the origin, destruction, and rebirth of the world.[5] This myth is described in the poem "Völuspá". "Völuspá" is told in the first person by a seeress whom Óðinn has asked to recount the ancient stories of men and gods, whom she, being a descendant of the giants, can remember:

> Ljóðs bið eg
> Allar kinder,
> Meiri og minni
> Mögu Heimdalar,
> Vildu að ég Valföður
> Vel fyr telja
> Forn spjöll fira
> Þau er fremst um man.
> (Eddukvæði 1998, 3)
>
> [Attention I ask
> from all the sacred people,
> Greater and lesser,
> the off spring of Heimdall;
> Father of the Slain, you wished
> that I should declare
> The ancient histories of men and gods,
> those which I remember from the first.
> (The Poetic Edda 1996, 4)]

The seeress reveals how the world was created out of emptiness, and how the Æsir, also descendants of the giants, created their own home, *Ásgarð*. She tells how three gods found two pieces of driftwood, Ash and Embla, which were without breath or spirit, and lacking in destiny:

---

4 For a discussion of whether the cosmological universe in Old Norse mythology is characterised by a linear or circular conception of time, see Clunies Ross (1994, I, 229-42) and Hastrup (1985, 150 and 1990, 31-32). For a discussion of time conceptions found in the dream accounts, see chapters 3 and 5 of this book.

5 Many anthropologists have pointed out similarities between myths and dreams, e.g. Eggan (1955); Burridge (1972, 129); Kuper (1979); Kracke (1987) and Lohmann (2010).

Uns þrír komu
úr því liði
öflgir og ástgir
æsir að húsi
fundu á landi,
lítt megandi
Ask og Emblu
Örlöglausa

Önd þau né áttu,
óð þau né höfðu,
lá né llæti,
né litu góða.
Önd gaf Óðinn,
óð gaf Hænir,
lá gaf Lóður
og litu góða
(Eddukvæði 1998, 6-7)

[Until three gods,
strong and loving,
came from that company
to the world;
they found on land
Ash and Embla,
capable of little,
lacking in fate

Breath they had not,
spirit they had not,
character nor vital spark
nor fresh complexions;
breath gave Odin,
spirit gave Hænir,
vital spark gave Lodur,
and fresh complexions
(The Poetic Edda 1996, 17)]

The pieces of driftwood were turned into the first man and woman by being given breath, spirit, vital spark, and fresh complexions. The stanzas give the impression that being without fate is associated with being lifeless. Paradoxically, perhaps, fate might be seen as an important ingredient of the life-giving process, along with breath, spirit, vital spark, and a fresh complexion. Despite for the

Icelandic örlög being often translated as fate, destiny might be more appropriate here. From this perspective, it is to be expected that not only men, but also the gods are at the mercy of fate, as "Völuspá" and "Baldurs draumar" describe.

Fate (destiny) is designated by various words in Old Norse literature: *urðr*, which derives from the verb *verða* ("becoming"); *örlög*, from *leggja* ("to lay out"); *sköp*, from *skapa*, "to create", and *rök*, as in *ragnarök*, which refers to the fate of the powers (Ross 1994, 242). Fate outlines the course of events in the lives of individuals, but also, on a more general level, that of society and the universe. Dreams play a central role in disclosing fate, even though the knowledge gained through dreaming will not enable the actors involved to avoid or influence the course of events, as "Baldurs draumar" illustrates. Fate is like a script for life, and although foreordaining, because gods and men are mortal, fate reveals that events and actions are related in a meaningful way. It is, however, important to note that knowing fated events does not remove human agency. The strength of humans is often revealed in the Old Icelandic texts, especially during the moments they face their destiny.

Dreams, disclosing destiny, appear not only in *Eddukvæði*. They are prominent in other Old Norse sources as well. In the *Landnámabók* ("Book of Settlements"), from the beginning of the twelfth century, a verse is quoted, which is said to be based on a dream. The verse predicts the death of several men (*Landnámabók* 1968, 194-95). In the same text, reference is made to a man called Finni enn draumspaki ("Finni the dream-wise" or "Finni the dream interpreter"). Another historiography, the *Íslendingabók* ("Book of Icelanders"), written by Ari fróði Þorgilsson (Ari "the wise" Þorgilsson) in the period between 1122 and 1133 AD, describes in detail the acceptance of Christianity in Iceland in the year 999 or 1000. Included in the text is the description of the actions of the speaker of laws, Þorgeir, which are decisive to the course of events. The Icelandic ethnologist, Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, has interpreted the actions of the speaker of law as an ancient soothsaying ritual (Aðalsteinsson 1999), but they also resemble a vision quest. The *Íslendingabók* tells how the Norwegian King Ólafr Tryggvason brought Christianity to Iceland. For this purpose, the king sent several missionaries to Iceland, not all of whom were successful. Some Icelanders were baptised, but the missionaries also encountered strong resistance, resulting in an inevitable conflict (Aðalsteinsson 1999, 63-78). Among the missionaries were two Icelanders, Gizurr and Hjalti, whom the King had sent to Iceland under compulsion, to Christianize the population. Gizurr and Hjalti came to Iceland's general assembly to state their case. They were received by kinsmen and friends, but also by a group of armed men, who tried to prevent them from preaching Christianity. For some reason, it did not develop into a fight. Hjalti and Gizurr were able to plead their case the next day (ibid., 85), and, according to the *Íslendingabók*, they did so in a very convincing manner. In the *Íslendingabók* it is written:

Þá báðu enir kristnu menn Hall á Síðu, at hann skyldi lög þeira upp segja, þau es kristninni skyldi fylgja. En hann leystisk því undan við þá, at hann keypti at Þorgeiri lögsögumanni, at hann skyldi upp segja, en hann vas enn þá heiðinn. En síðan es menn kvómu í búðir, þá lagðisk hann niðr Þorgeirr ok breiddi feld sinn á sik ok hvílði þann dag allan ok nóttina eptir ok kvað ekki orð. En of morguninn eptir settisk hann upp ok gørði orð, at menn skyldi ganga til Lögbergis. En þá hóf hann tölu sína upp, . . .
"En nú þykkir mér þat ráð," kvað hann, "at vér látim ok eigi þá ráða, es mest vilja í gegn gangask, ok miðlum svá mál á miðli þeira, at hvárirtveggju hafi nakkvat síns máls, ok höfum allir ein lög ok einn sið. Þat mon verða satt, es vér slítum í sundr lögin, at vér monum slíta ok friðinn."

En hann lauk svá máli sínu, at hvárirtveggju játtu því, at allir skyldi ein lög hafa, þau sem hann réði upp at segja. Þá vas þat mælt í lögum, at allir menn skyldi kristnir vesa ok skírn taka, þeir es áðr váru óskírðir á landi hér; en of barnaútburð skyldu standa en fornu lög ok of hrossakjötsát. Skyldu menn blóta á laun, ef vildu, en varða fjörbaugsgarðr, ef váttum of kvæmi við. En síðarr fám vetrum vas sú heiðni af numin sem önnur. (Íslendingabok in ÍF 1968, I, 16-17)

[Then the Christian men asked Síðu-Hallr to declare the laws which should go with Christianity; but he got clear of this by feeing Þorgeir the Lawspeaker that he should declare them, and he was still a heathen. And then when men went to the booths, Þorgeir lay down and spread his cloak over him and rested all that day and the night after, and did not speak a word. But the next morning he sat up and gave the word for men to go to Lögberg. And when men were come there he began his speech, and said that he thought that the people's condition would be in a sorry plight, if men were not all to have the same laws [and custom] here in the country. And he persuaded men in many ways that they should never let this come about, saying that it would lead to such disturbance that it was certain that the resulting conflicts would lay waste the country . . .
And he ended his speech with each side agreeing to this, that all should have the same laws, those which he should announce. Then it was declared to be law that all people should be Christians and receive baptism who were previously unbaptised here in the land; but that as to exposure of children the old laws should stand, and also as to the eating of horseflesh. Men might sacrifice secretly if they wished, but lesser outlawry was the penalty if witnesses to it could be brought. But few years later this heathendom was abolished like the rest. (Aðalsteinsson 1999, 80-81)]

Þorgeir's act of lying down, spreading his cloak over himself, and resting the whole day and night without speaking a word, is that which Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson (1999) interprets as a soothsaying ritual. Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson mentions parallels, known from other Old Icelandic sources, with the practice of murmuring or muttering into one's cloak as a way of obtaining hidden knowledge (ibid., 110-13). He also relates this behaviour to the practice of resting or sleeping for a lengthy period, during which those who are near the sleeper are not allowed to utter the sleeper's name. Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson interprets this as a kind of shamanistic practice, whereby the body lies still, as in sleep or death, while the "soul" visits other realms, and observes what is happening in other times and places. An example from *Hjalmters ok Ölvers saga* supports his case. This saga tells of Hörðr, whose "soul" materialised during such a flight, in the form of a humpback whale, and engaged in a battle with the whale form of King Hundingr:

> Hörðr mælti: þar er sú skepna, at mèr er minnst um, ok ek má eigi sjá; verði þið nú, fóstbræðr! nokkurs styrks við at njóta, ok eigi megi þið nefna mik, á meðan hann er hèr, því þá dey ek. ("Hjalmters ok Ölvers saga" in *Fornaldar Sögur Norðrlanda* 1830, 506-07)
>
> [Hörðr spoke: There is a creature, which I hate most, and I must not look at it. Now, brothers, you will be helped by a little bodily strength--but you must not speak my name while it is there, for then I would die. ("The Saga of Hjalmther and Olvir" in *Icelandic Histories and Romances* 2006, 164)]

Similarly, in *Kormáks saga*, when a shape-shifting witch is shot in her walrus form, her human form is also hurt:

> Þá er þeir bræðr létu ór læginu, kom upp hjá skipinu hrosshvalr. Kormákr skaut til hans pálstaf, ok kom á hvalinn, ok søkkðisk. Þóttusk menn þar kenna augu Þórveigar. Þessi hvalr kom ekki upp þaðan í frá, en til Þórveigrar spurðisk þat, at hon lá hætt, ok er þat sögn manna, at hon hafi af því dáit. ("Kormáks saga" in *ÍF* 1939, VIII, 265-66)
>
> [When the brothers put out from their place of anchorage, a walrus surfaced beside the ship. Kormak fired a weighted staff at it, hitting the animal, so that it sank. People thought they recognised Thorveig's eyes when they saw it. The animal did not surface from then on; and it was reported of Thorveig that she was dangerously ill, and people say that she died as a result. ("Kormak's Saga" in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders* 1997, I, 208)]

Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson is not the only one who has drawn attention to the resemblance of actions and rituals described in the Old Norse sources to shamanistic practice. Strömbäck (1935), Eliade (1964), and Grambo (1984 and 1989) have made similar claims (also, see Dillmann's discussion, 2006, 269-308). These studies often support their cases by referring to the following example from "Ynglinga Saga", written by the chieftain, Snorri Sturluson (1178-1241):

> Óðinn skipti hömum. Lá þá búkrinn sem sofandi eða dauðr, en hann var þá fugl eða dýr, fiskr eða ormr ok fór á einni svipstund á fiarlæg lönd at sínum erendum eða annara manna. ("Ynglinga saga" in *Heimskringla* 1946, I, 9)

> [Odin often changed himself; at those times his body lay as though he were asleep or dead, and then he became a bird or beast, a fish or dragon, and went in an instant to far-off lands on his own or other men's errands. ("Ynglinga Saga" in *Heimskringla* 1932, 5)]

The question is whether this passage can be used as proof of the existence of shamanistic practices. Snorri Sturluson wrote his work two hundred years after Christianity had been adopted in Iceland, and composed his text on the basis of several manuscripts with which he was familiar.

Conceptions of body and the soul as we encounter them in the early literary sources are ambiguous and assorted. In some cases, the soul can free itself from the body, and may materialize in animal form, as in the above example of the shape shifting of Óðinn. Here, the body is left behind, almost like a corpse, showing no sign of activity. In other cases, actions that sleepers undertake in other realms have a direct effect on their body, which can be observed by those who are awake (e.g., "Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings" in *ÍF* 1943, VI, 349; "Brennu-Njáls Saga" in *ÍF*, XII, 1954, 155; "Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu" in *ÍF*, 1938, III, 53). These examples presume a higher degree of integration of body and soul than do those examples selected by authors in order to support their argument that shamanistic practices are being discussed.

It is probably because Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson focuses on the attribute of the cloak in his analysis, that he does not discuss Þorgeir's act in the light of the belief in the revelatory power of dreams, which is so apparent in the Old Icelandic material. Three aspects, which characterize many dream accounts, can be related to Þorgeir's conduct. First, there is the idea that people should not be addressed when they are dreaming; they should be allowed to finish their dream.[6] An example of this can also be found in "Brennu-Njáls saga":

---

6 The necessity of finishing one's dreams is also an important aspect of modern Icelandic dream practice.

Nú er þar til at taka, at Gunnar ríðr austr yfir Þjórsá. En er hann var kominn skammt frá ánni, syfjaði hann mjök, ok bað hann þá æja; þeir gerðu svá. Hann sofnaði fast ok lét illa í svefni. Kolskeggr mælti: "Dreymir Gunnar nú." Hjörtr mælti: "Vekja vildi ek hann."
"Eigi skal þat," segir Kolskeggr; "njóta skal hann draums síns." Gunnar lá mjög langa hríð og varp síðan af sér skikkjunni, og var honum varmt mjög.
("Brennu-Njáls Saga" in *ÍF* 1954, XII, 155)

[Now to return to Gunnar: he rode east across the Thjorsa River, and when he was only a short way beyond the river he became very sleepy. He asked his companions to stop, and they did so. He fell into a deep sleep but slept restlessly.
Kolskegg said, "Gunnar is having a dream."
Hjort said, "I'd like to wake him,"
"Don't do that," said Kolskegg. "Let him finish his dream."
Gunnar lay there for a long time and then threw off his cloak, and he was very warm.
("Njál's Saga" in The Complete Sagas of Icelanders 1997, III, 73)]

As noted earlier, the concept of the soul appears in so many diverse ways in the sources, that it makes it difficult to find evidence for the claim that waking the dreamer would prevent the soul from returning to the body, even though the frequency with which this idea appears indicates this. The idea that dreamers should be left in peace could also point to the epistemological value of the dream: The engagement in other temporal and spatial realms, which leads to insight in coming events, might be considered so valuable that interruption should be avoided. A second element, which appears in the dream accounts and can be related to the actions of the speaker of laws actions, is that those observing the sleeper can often tell from the sleeper's behaviour that she or he is engaged in events in the dream sphere, wherein knowledge of waking life is disclosed. Thus, the dreaming experience, by being embodied, is already "shared" at the moment of dreaming. A third important point is that the idea exists that a dream or vision quest can be evoked, even though in less dramatic ways than we know from the vision quests among North American Indians. The Icelandic literature shows that dreams may be evoked by placing certain herbs under a pillow (Jónasson frá Hrafnagili 1934, 417). Other examples demonstrate that sleeping at certain places evokes dreams. During my fieldwork in Hrunamannahreppur, I was told a story of such a place, which is a depression in a hill, situated between the church of Hruna and a rock called *Hrunakarl* ("the Man of Hruna"), owing to the fact that the rock resembles a man's head. The story goes that if a young unmarried woman lies down to sleep there, she will dream of the man she will marry. Like the placing of dream herbs under the pillow, this practice belongs to

the realm of folk tales, collected during the nineteenth, and at the start of the twentieth century.

It is perhaps no surprise that a practice resembling a vision quest is part of the narrative which deals with the adoption of Christianity in Iceland. Dream accounts are so numerous in the sagas that they can hardly be avoided and dreams are often put forward as the main source of inspiration for important decisions to be taken. According to Georgia Dunham Kelchner, at least five hundred and thirty references to dreams can be found in the Old Norse literature (Kelchner 1935, 3), and Paul Schach estimates that this number is in fact much larger (1971, 51). The large corpus of dreams is found in the *Konungasögur* ("Kings' sagas"), of which *Heimskringla*, written by Snorri Sturluson, and dealing with the Norwegian dynasty, is most known; the *Fornaldarsögur* ("Sagas of antiquity"), which are myths and heroic legends with folkloristic motifs: ghost stories, troll stories, and fairy tales (Einarsson 1957, 157); and especially in the *Íslendingasögur* (the Icelandic family sagas), from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in which heroic Icelanders, who lived in the tenth and eleventh centuries, play key roles. Dreams also appear frequently in *Sturlungasaga*, a compilation of nine contemporary sagas of the thirteenth century, with *Íslendingasaga* as the main work. *Íslendingasaga* was written by Sturla Þórðarson (1214-1284), and deals with the political history of the twelfth, and (especially) thirteenth centuries. In contrast to other sources, which often describe events that have taken place several centuries before, Sturla Þórðarson describes (nearly) contemporary events. For this reason, scholars value the work as an important source for investigating the dynamics of social life at that time (e.g., see Nordal 1998, 33).

Scholars from different disciplines have written extensively on the dream accounts that are present in Iceland's early literature. The central question raised, particularly in the earlier works on Old Icelandic dreams, is whether the many dream accounts are authentic or rhetorical devices and, thus, the authors' inventions. Wilhelm Henzen, who, in 1890, wrote a dissertation with the title, *Ueber die Träume in der altnordischen Sagalitteratur*, was interested in the dream as part of the Germanic *Weltanschauung*. Henzen argued that the fundamental structure of dream accounts reflects Nordic folk beliefs, of which the concept of fate, and contact with the dead are central features (Henzen 1890, 75-77). In her 1934 dissertation, Margarete Haeckel criticizes Henzen's study, for drawing on various works--*Fornaldarssögur*, *Konungasögur* and *Íslendingasögur*--without offering a critical analysis of their literary style and origin. Haeckel's aim is to study: "den Traum als künstlerisches Moment in der altnordischen Dichtung" (Haeckel 1934, 1) [the dreams as artistic moment in the Old Norse poetry (m.t.).] Influenced by Sigmund Freud's work, Haeckel relates the aesthetic conception of the dream to its chaotic appearance, and sees the dream as belonging to the domain that equates association and fantasy. She writes: "Der Traum bedarf einer 'Deutung'. Man sinnt über ihn nach, man erzählt ihn des Seltsamen, Unverständlichen wegen, das ihm anhaftet und zu einer Erklärung drängt"

(ibid., 5) [The dream needs a meaning. One ponders the dream, one tells of its strange and incomprehensible quality that asks for an explanation.] Going through the various dream examples in the *Íslendingasögur*, she emphasizes the fact that the dream is solely constructed for the purpose of the saga in which it appears. In support of her argument, she indicates a discrepancy between the dream account and the interpretations they receive in the sagas. The difficulty she faces in deducing the interpretation from the dream account causes her to feel that text is missing (ibid., 25). Haeckel may be criticised for not transcending the literary context in which the dream accounts appear. She ignores the fact that dream narration is embedded in social practice and cosmological conceptions. While Henzen's work lacks a critical approach to "text", Haeckel is missing to include "life"; the recognition of the existence of a body of dreamlore, known at least in part to the public of the saga composers.

In 1935, Georgia Dunham Kelchner wrote the book, *Dreams in Old Norse Literature and Their Affinities in Folklore*. Kelchner finds both pre-Christian and Christian dreams in the literature, and logically draws from this the fact that the sagas, with the exception of *Sturlunga saga*, were written at a time when Iceland had been Christianised for several centuries (Kelchner 1935, 3-4). According to Kelchner, the dream accounts in the literature clearly reflect a tradition of dream narration in daily life, but the dream records are shaped and standardised by literary demands (ibid., 76). Kelchner compares the dreams from the Old Icelandic sources with those in the folk tales, collected in the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century. She notes that dream accounts in the early sources stress the belief in destiny, and demonstrate an intense interest in worldly matters. For Kelchner, the latter is a typical expression of pre-Christian thought. In the later material, the emphasis is on life after death, which Kelchner sees as an influence of Christianity (ibid., 75). Despite these differences, she concludes that dream accounts in both early and later material demonstrate many affinities, and the later accounts should be considered as developments of the earlier dreams (ibid., 5).

Maria Sluijter, too, in her 1936 doctoral thesis, *IJslands Volksgeloof* ("Icelandic Folk Belief"), points out that folk belief in the early literature and the later recorded folk tales shows a remarkable continuity. Sluijter relates this to the frequent reading of the sagas, and Iceland's isolation (ibid., 190-91). Sluijter's argument that the isolation of Iceland is responsible for the continuity in Icelandic folk belief can no longer be supported. Several scholars have found evidence of influences from foreign sources on Icelandic dream accounts (e.g., Larsen 1917; Turville-Petre 1967; Schach 1971). According to Paul Schach, the dream accounts in the Icelandic sagas do not differ essentially from those in the medieval epics and romances, in their purpose of providing both writer and reader with a neat outline of an episode or an entire story (Schach 1971, 52). Schach also argues that the huge emphasis on fatalism is Icelandic, and reflects that also the writers believed in destiny (ibid., 72-73).

Robert James Glendinning (1974) has studied the dreams recorded in *Íslendingasaga*, for the previously mentioned reason that it is considered the most authentic of the early literature. Glendinning is concerned with the stereotypical character of the dream accounts, which is the reason that many scholars assume that the majority of the dreams in the sagas are fictitious. Nevertheless, Glendinning is convinced, as is Schach, that the belief in fate was a significant component of the early Icelandic conceptual universe, and writes:

> Niemand, der die Sturlungasaga gelesen hat, kann daran zweifeln, daß viele Isländer des 13. Jahrhunderts ihre Träume für orakelhaft hielten und sie äußerst ernst nahmen. (Glendinning 1974, 21)
>
> [No one, who has read Sturlungasaga, will doubt that many Icelanders in the thirteenth century believed that dreams could be premonitions and were taken very serious. (m.t.)]

Of the forty-five dreams Glendinning counts in the saga, forty-one predict bloodshed or death (Glendinning 1973-1974, 131). Dreams as author's constructions are discussed in relation to the political life of early Iceland. Schach (1971, 71) makes the point that dream accounts often served political interests, and were used as propaganda. The sagas, in particular, were the means of the Icelandic elite, who used dream symbols to legitimize their social positions. A tree, for example, was considered to be a symbol of successive generations of reigns. The theme of dream narration as political act returns in William Ian Miller's work of 1986. Miller demonstrates how dream accounts were used in early Icelandic society. He argues that in times of conflict, people could, through the telling of a dream, point out an offender without being held responsible for the accusation. The sharing of dreams as such was a powerful political tool (Miller 1986, 101-23). Because the origins of dreams are thought to be external to persons, dream accounts were a suitable method for covering up motivations and manipulation. Lönnroth (2006) refines this political argument, on the basis of an analysis of dream accounts in *Sverris Saga*. He argues that the purpose of mentioning, in the saga, the dreams dreamt by King Sverrir, is to establish him as a Christian *rex iustus*, and the only legitimate king of Norway. According to Lönnroth, the ideology expressed in the dream accounts thus fits well into mainstream medieval politics. Despite this, Lönnroth notes that the gloomy and mythical style of dream narration, and the saga in general, is highly original within Western literature. It should be added that the dreams of Sverrir include crucial elements which also are found in later sources: the same *draummaður* ("dream man") appears in several of Sverrir's dream, communicating messages, or inviting Sverrir to follow him. The following sequence is found in Icelandic dream accounts, from the saga literature up to the present day: 1. the dreamer lies in bed; 2. a dream man, a deceased or supernatural figure, whose identity may be hidden or revealed, appears at the bedside, inform-

ing the dreamer of a coming event, or inviting him to come along and see for himself what will happen; 3. after the dreamer has travelled to other realms, the dreamer is returned to his bed under the guidance of the dream man; 4. the dreamer awakens, and relates his experience to waking events (e.g., see *Skíðaríma* (Homan 1975) and Kötludraumur (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 59), discussed below).

The above-mentioned studies vary in approach, depending on whether the dreams are considered to be solely rhetorical devices, invented to serve political or aesthetic interests, or whether they have been "really" dreamt, and thus represent a practice of dream narration and interpretation in early Icelandic society. These two perspectives reflect the earlier mentioned debate between the "book prose" theory, which views the sagas as fiction, and the "free prose" theory, which postulates that the sagas can be used as sources to reconstruct the history and ethnography of early Iceland (Pálsson 1995, 83). This division between "fact and fiction" or "life and text" has been criticised by Preben Meulengracht Sørensen in the following way:

> It became a cardinal point in textual criticism that the family sagas must either be regarded as works of literature or as historical works, and scholars always concluded that it was the former . . . They are in fact both; they are accounts of events that took place in a previous culture and as such are appropriate objects for historical and anthropological study, but they are also narrative representations of that past and therefore suitable objects for literary analysis and interpretation. (Meulengracht Sørensen 1992, 33)

Therefore, Meulengracht Sørensen advocates an approach which integrates a generalised cultural-anthropological description with literary analysis and interpretation of individual texts. While the question of whether the dreams are authentic might be useful for studies involving textual criticism, for an anthropological study, it is less useful. More fruitful than rejecting the narrative expression of the dreams on the basis of the idea that it is psychologically impossible for the dream to have been dreamt as it is described, the dream experience (which we will never be able to grasp fully), the narrative expression, and the social context by which the dream was shaped and received, should be considered as integrated. A study of the narration of dreams in everyday life in modern Iceland reveals that the narrative form of dream accounts is often standardised, although, obviously, to a lesser degree than encountered in the written sources. Already in the process of awakening and recalling the dream, the dream is shaped by the dream lore with which the dreamer is familiar, and, when communicated, by the cosmological and social contexts, the actors involved, and the purpose of its communication. This does not necessarily mean that the dream is invented. It is simply that the dream is constantly changed and adjusted, in accordance with the demands of waking life, because it is there that it receives

meaning. The dream may very well evolve and be narrated again and again by different actors, leaving its "origin" behind, and embracing new elements. This does not mean that the dream is not "life". The dream is most likely penetrated by cosmological assumptions, feelings, anxieties, a body of dream lore, and previous experiences, which are "real", and have exerted an influence on the dream's coming into being in the first place.

The most obvious indication that the dream accounts in the Old Icelandic literature are firmly embedded in a practice of narration and interpretation of dreams in Icelandic society of that time, is the discrepancy between dream narrative and interpretation, which Margarete Haeckel found disturbing. The composers of the sagas presume that their audience shares the philosophy that dreaming has revelatory powers, and is familiar with the body of dream lore. This is especially clear in those instances wherein the interpretation of dreams is the subject of negotiation. Examples of this are the dream interpretations of Kostbera and Högna in "Atlamál in grænlenzku" ("Atlamál in grænlenzku", in *Eddukvæði* 1998, 332, stanzas 16-19), which I will discuss in chapter 3, and "Laxdæla saga", in which Þorkell Eyjólfsson asks his wife, Guðrún, to interpret his dream:

> Þat er sagt, eitt sinn, at Þorkell sagði Guðrúnu draum sinn. "Þat dreymdi mik," segir hann, "at ek þóttumk eiga skegg svá mikit, at tæki um allan Breiðafjörð." Þorkell bað hana ráða drauminn. Guðrún spurði: "Hvat ætlar þú þenna draum þýða?" "Auðsætt þykki mér þat, at þar mun standa ríki mitt um allan Breiðafjörð." "Vera má, at svá sé," segir Guðrún, "en heldr myndi ek ætla, at þar myndir þú drepa skeggi í Breiðafjörð niðr." ("Laxdæla Saga" in *ÍF* 1934, V, 215)
>
> [It is said that Þorkell once told Guðrun of a dream he had: "I dreamt," he said, "that I had such a long beard that it spread all over Breiðafjörð." Þorkell asked her to interpret the dream. Guðrún asked, "What do you think the dream means?" "It seems to me obvious that it means my domain will extend over the whole of Breiðafjörð." "That may well be the case," said Guðrún, "but I am inclined to expect that it means that you will be dipping your beard in to Breiðafjörð." (*The Saga of the People of Laxardal* 1997, V, 113)]

It is left to the public to choose the right interpretation: Either Þorkell is right, and he will extend his possessions, or Guðrún is right, and Þorkell will be dipping his beard in Breiðafjord: in other words, he will be drowned. The dream account is a good example of the lively and humorous style of some of the sagas (cf. Kress 1987). Guðrún's response to her husband is provocative. She seems to be challenging his narrow-mindedness, preoccupied as he is by wealth. A similar form of humour is found in *Bandamanna saga*, although the sagas do not otherwise resemble each other. *Bandamanna saga* is a satire, which describes

chieftains consumed by greed (Durrenberger and Wilcox 1992). More important to my discussion here, though, is that the sharing of Þorkell's dream is clearly part of the range of rhetorical devices which the saga composer had at his or her disposal. However, these devices would have had a limited effect, if dream sharing had not been common practice in daily life, and a shared body of dream lore had not existed. It should be expected that both "life" and "text" in early Iceland were directed by the same conceptual organisation and practice (cf. Spiegel 1990, 68).

From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century

The literary production from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century is commonly judged as inferior to Old Norse literature, with regard to originality and literary style. With regard to the amount of trustworthy historical sources, the Icelandic historian Gunnar Karlsson writes: "Two bishops' sagas and a few brief annals are the only [available] narrative sources" (Karlsson 2000, 86). For the anthropologist several documents are available. Travel accounts, such as *Ferðabók Eggerts Ólafssonar 1752-1757* (Ólafsson 1975), provide valuable information about living conditions, customs, and religious practices and beliefs of this period. Other informative general descriptions of Icelandic society are *Qualiscunque Descriptio Islandiae* (*Íslandslýsing*), probably written by Bishop Oddur Einarsson, around 1590 (Einarsson 1971), and *Crymogæa* (which means "Iceland" in Greek), written in Latin by the Icelander Árngrímur Jónsson (Jónsson 1985) in 1609, with the aim of correcting misleading assumptions that existed in Europe about the country. It is known that Bishop Oddur Einarsson dreamt of his approaching death (Eiríksson 1972).[7]

Thus, dreams continue to appear in various sources, in the centuries after the Icelanders' great literary achievements. This might perhaps be seen as yet another indication that dream accounts were not solely rhetorical devices, but seen as an important means of disclosing coming events, by crossing over to other times and places. Numerous references to dreams are found in the so-called *rímur*, metrical romances that were the most popular form of literature in Iceland from the fourteenth century until the nineteenth century (1975, 139). *Rímur af Úlfari Sterka*, by Þorlákur Guðbrandsson, dating from before 1746 (*Sýnisbók íslenzkra rímna* 1952, 161) and *Skíðaríma* are a few examples. The latter is thought to originate from the period prior to the fifteenth century (Guðmundsson et al. 1993, 347), but the oldest existing written record originates from 1737 (Homan 1975, 16). Thus, this *ríma* has been popular over a longer period of time, and exists in several forms. To discuss principal features of the dream accounts of the period from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, and possible

7 The article used here is a printed copy without page numbers, which I kindly received from Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson.

changes that have occurred in dream narration, I will here briefly present *Skíðaríma*.

The main figure of this ríma is Skíði, a vagrant, who wanders from farm to farm in hopes of receiving food in exchange for his providing entertainment as a storyteller. Eventually, he arrives at a farm where he receives neither food nor drink. Skíði eats some fish that he has in his own bag, but he quickly runs out of butter, which ends his meal. He decides to go to sleep, and lies himself down on the corner bench. The teller of the story foresees that Skíði's dream will be disturbing that night, because Skíði forgets to cross himself, as expressed in stanzas forty-four and forty-five:

44.
Echj fra eg han signe sig
Seint tok gleden ad (ra)/kan,
Og mon bradt það ugger mig,
Af Illum draume vakna.

45.
Sydan for ad sofna bradt
Seggen eingen geymde,
ferleg/unduren fram á natt
fra eg han skyda dreimde

[44.
I did not learn that he crossed himself.
Gradually joy began to decrease
and before long, I am afraid,
he will wake up from an evil dream.

45.
Then he quickly fell asleep
nobody took notice of the man.
Great marvels later that night,
I learned, Skidi dreamt.]

Then Ása-Þórr (the god Thor) visits him in his dream, and brings him to the court of Óðinn:

46.
Iñ kom madur j stofuna stor,
Mez stælltan HAMar j hende,
Þar var / hiñ Ille Asa Þor
Sem Oden kongur sende

47.
Ordum hagar / þannan Þór
Þegar hann finnur skyda,
Odeñ kongur yferman vor,
ydur / bad til sijn Ryda.

52.
skyde fra eg ad skaust á fætur,
og skundar ut mez Þóre /
(e) chj er millding minna verdur
mon eg á fund hans sækja.

[46.
A tall man entered the room,
An iron hammer in his hand;
That was the evil Asa-Thor,
Sent by king Odin

47.
Thor arranges his words in this way
When he finds Skidi:
"King Odin, our chieftain,
asked you to go to him"

52.
Skidi, I learned, started to his feet and rushes out with Thor.
I did not learn that he behaved modestly,
the tall man (tree of swords)]

At the court of Óðinn, things go well for Skíði. He is even offered the opportunity to marry. Then, however, Skíði provokes the Norse gods, by mentioning the name of God. When he does so for a third time, an enormous fight breaks out, in which Skíði kills many. He even manages to pull out a gigantic tooth of the wolf, Fafnir. When Skíði finally awakens, his host addresses himself to Skíði:

187.
Þorgils / talar vid þegnen brádt
Þú hiñ vonde slange
þú / hefur ærst j alla nátt,
og einast verid á gange.

188.
fátækt / hefur hier folkid margt
feingid Af þier nauder,
Imsa hefur / þu byst og bart
Eñ bragnar fim eru dauder.

[187.
Thorgils soon speaks to the man:
"You mean serpent, you have been behaving like a madman the
whole night and also walked in your sleep."

188.
"Many a poor soul here
suffered this night from you.
You have beaten and struck several people and five men are dead."]

Not only are the dead men in waking life presented as proof of the true nature of Skíði's actions while dreaming, the ríma provides other evidence as well:

192.
Brád / lega seiger han brögnum frá
Hvad bar fyrer han j suefne,
Margur /setur j meire skrá,
Minna yrkez Efne.

193.
skatnar hu-/gdu ad skyda brádt,
og skodudu han upp og nidre,
hans var / vyda hörundid blátt
eñ hárid lykast fidre.

194.
Hy-/rdsla hans mez hagleik
gior,
Hun var tóm ad kvöllde /
Þar var komid j þrijfornt smiör,
Þad var ur Asia vellde.

196.
fundu þeir j trusse hans töñ
20 marka þunga
nu / má vita ad sagan er söñ
seima þollsinz unga. /
(Homan 1975, 197-216)

[192.
Soon he related to the men
what had happened to him in his sleep.
Many a man commits to more paper lesser material for poetry.

193.
The men quickly looked at Skidi,
Inspected him from top to toe.
His skin was black and blue all over and his hair almost resembled
feathers.

194.
His chest, craftily [sic] made,
had been empty last night.
Very old butter had come into it,
which came from Asia.

196.
In his luggage
they found the tooth weighing ten pounds.
Now you may know that the
story of the young man (fir of treasures) is true.
(Homan 1975, 350-59)]

Skíðaríma is interpreted as a parody of both the early rímur and the ancient myths (Einarsson 1957, 90; Guðmundsson et al. 1993, 347; Clunies Ross and Lönnroth 1999, 9). However, the use of a dream should not, in this case, be seen as a parody of dream narration. Even though, the dream is part of the constructed narrative, it is presented as an accepted means of crossing over to other realms. While the content of the ríma in relation to the ancient mythology reveals inconsistencies and grotesque scenarios, the role ascribed to the dream follows the tradition of dream narration of previous centuries, and is similar, as well, to dream accounts of later times. We know from stanza forty-four that something will happen. The narrator of the tale foresees that Skíði will have disturbing dreams, because he forgets to cross himself. As I mentioned previously, disturbing dreams often point to the mingling of external powers in the sleeper's condition, leading to a crossing-over of time and space. Thus, Skíði's dream is a gateway to another realm, here, the realm of the gods. The way in which Skíði travels to the world of the gods in his dreams demonstrates a structure similar to that of both older and later dream accounts, in which people cross over to other temporal and spatial realms, and corresponds to the four-phase sequence which I previously described: Skíði does not travel to the world of the gods on his own initiative. Instead, the god Þór comes to him, to pass on an invitation from Óðinn. Skíði, then follows Þór to the other world. The world Skíði enters is pre-

sented as a real world, which is evidenced by the hero waking up wounded, and bringing with him attributes from the world of the gods: butter and Fafnir's tooth. Also, the fact that Skíði not only kills in the dream sphere, but simultaneously causes the death of five men in waking life, illustrates his engagement in "real" events. His bodily behaviour is also interesting, in light of my previous discussion of the ambiguous Icelandic conception of the soul. Skíði's body is not lying still while his soul has set off for other worlds. Instead, his experience and behaviour in the dream sphere, the world of the gods, can be read from his bodily behaviour in the waking world. Even though the brutality of the actions during dreaming and while being awake is of such an intensity that the proof of the real nature of the dream is exaggerated, compared to the evidence provided in other dream accounts, the idea that those who observe the sleeper can tell from the sleeper's bodily behaviour that he is engaged in the dream sphere is well documented in other examples.[8]

The popularity of the Icelandic rímur draws attention to the diversity of opinions in Icelandic society, on religious and spiritual matters. With the Reformation, printing went into the hands of the church, the aim of which was to make God's word available in the people's own language, and in this way to save souls from the influence of the devil. The New Testament, psalm and prayer books, and several theological works were the church's main instruments. Two main developments in dream accounts can be traced to the influence of the Reformation. On the one hand, attempts were made to move people's attention away from the secular rímur. Bishop Guðbrandur Þorlákssson (1541/42-1627), who was especially active in this matter, criticised "the useless ditties, trolls--and ancient rhymes, love songs, love prose, satiric and moodiness prose and other evil and ugly poetry: obscenities, slander and provocations, which here amongst the common people are loved more--to offence of God and his angels, to the pleasure and service of the devil and his demons--than in every other Christian country and more in the line of heathen custom than Christian" (Sigurðsson 1976, 50). In 1612, Guðbrandur Þorlákssson offered the Icelanders an alternative to the secular rímur, printing religious rímur in his *Vísnabók*. His attempt to stamp out popular literature did not work. *Vísnabók* did not achieve popularity. It was 136 years before it was reprinted, with some adjustments (Sigurðsson 1976, 52). Nonetheless, other clergymen continued to create secular rímur (Eiríksson 1975, 143). The autobiography of the Reverend Jón Steingrímsson is one of the most beautiful examples of how secular literature, Christianity, and local beliefs were integrated in the lives and works of the clergymen. Jón Steingrímsson (1728-1791) became reverend of the parish of Kirkjubæjarklaustur in 1778, near the uninhabited area situated more inland, where the dramatic Lakagígar eruption took place in 1783. In his autobiography, Jón Steingrímsson writes movingly about the first dream he dreamt after having moved to Kirkjubæjarklaustur in 1778:

8 For a discussion of these examples, see chapter 5.

Þá fyrsta nótt, er ég svaf hér til veru kominn, dreymir mig ég þóttist vera fyrir norðan og klifra þar upp hátt fjall og var að kasta þar af mér öllum fötunum, þar til ég var orðinn ber og nakinn. Komst ég þá í langan dal, sem lá til útnorðurs. Sá ég úr honum á sjó. Þar þóttist ég koma að eina húsi, í hvert ég vildi fara, svo nakinn sem ég var. Á móti mér kemur þar ein tröllskessa er segir: „Vel ertu nú kominn í mínar hendur. Hefur þú tvisvar sloppið úr þeim, en nú skaltu ekki sleppa, því ég skal drepa þig og éta síðan". Þyki mér hún kalla á tvo stráka, er undir eins komu með hvatta hnífa að skera mig á háls, hvar til þeir gáfu sig. Ég þýkist segja við tröllið: "Ekkert kvíði ég fyrir dauða né að færa mig undan honum, en leyfðu mér áður að leggja mig hér á jörð fyrir fótum þér, því ég sem kristinn maður vil gera mína bæn til guðs og biðja hann taka móti sálu minni". Hún lætur það eftir. Að minni bæn endaðri stend ég upp aftur, en þeir taka til mín að drepa mig. En í því kemur á bak við þá frískur maður grænklæddur, sem undir eins slær hnífinn úr hendi þeirra og segir: "Þið skuluð ei fá að drepa hann", og hrindir þeim til baka. En kerlingin segir: Þó þið séuð nátengdir, hefur ykkur aldrei saman komið, og svo fer enn". Þýki mér þessi maður fá mér allan fatnað að færa mig í. Utanhafnarfötin voru öllu sauðsvört. Þar er við höndina jarpur hestur með öllum reiðtygjum. Þar upp á setur hann mig og snotran hatt á höfuð mér og segir: "Ríð þú nú burt", hvað ég þóttistí fullu frelsi gera í útnorður eftir dalnum, og í því vaknaði ég. Sagði ég strax konu minni þennan draum, þar hún var hjá mér. En hún strax réði hann á þann hátt, ég mundi hér bæði sig og allt missa. Mundu þá mitt í því að mér sækja einhverir tveir öfundarmenn. Mitt í því mundi mér til liðs koma einhver einn góður maður, í tengdum við þá. Ég mundi aftur viðrétta af sauðfé. Sá sami mundi og hjálpa mér til giftingar aftur, og mundi það úr útnorðursátt koma. Kom allt þetta fram síðar, sem sýnt mun verða. (Steingrímsson 1973, 191)

[On the first night that I slept here after moving, I dreamed that I was in the north country, climbing a high mountain, and that I was throwing off all my clothes until I was completely naked. I then came into a valley stretching to the northwest, from which the sea was visible. In my dream I came to a house which I wanted to enter, naked as I was. I was met there by a giantess who said to me: "Good, now you are in my hands! Twice you have escaped me; but you shall not escape this time. I am going to kill you and then eat you!" I dreamed she then summoned two boys, who appeared with sharp knives which with they meant to slit my throat. In my dream I said to the giantess: "I am not afraid of dying, nor am I anxious to avoid it. But first permit me to lie on the ground at your feet. I am a Christian man, and I want to

> say my prayers to God and ask him to receive my soul." She obliged me in this. When my prayer was over I stood up, and the two boys took hold of me to kill me. At this point, a vigorous man, clad in green, came up behind them, knocked the knife out of their hands saying, "You aren't going to kill him!", and thrust them backwards. The old woman then said: "You two boys may be closely related to this man, but you have never been able to get along together, and so it continues to be!" In my dream the man now gave me a full set of clothes to dress myself in. My outer garments were of the colour of a black sheep. There at hand was a bay horse, with all its riding gear. He put me on the horse, set a nice hat on my head, and said: "Now ride off!" So I rode off unhindered along the valley toward the north-west--and woke up. I told this dream to my wife, who was beside me. Right away she interpreted it to mean that I was going to lose both her and all my possessions, and in this process would be attacked by two men who were jealous at me. In the midst of all this some good man would come to my aid, related by marriage to the other two. I would recover from my loss of sheep; and the same good man would help me to remarry--from a northwesterly direction. All this came to pass later on, as I shall relate. (Steingrímsson 2002, 178)]

After his wife had interpreted his dream, Jón Steingrímsson was sure that a dramatic event would occur, although, as he stated in his autobiography, it was impossible at that point to fully comprehend the scale of the catastrophe. The interpretation of the dream by his wife is supported by several omens in waking life, and the fact that various honourable men had similar dreams. Jón Steingrímsson writes:

> Eldroði sást á lofti og teikn, ormar og pestarflugur á jörðu, skrímsli í vötnum og eldmaurildi á jörðu, item hljóð og veinan í hennar iðrum, vanskapan á nokkrum lömbum. Drambsemin sté upp, sem ávallt er fallinunæst. Marga skikkanlega menn dreymdi það, sem eftir kom. (Steingrímsson 1973, 192)

> [Fiery redness was visible in the sky; strange apparitions, worms, and noxious flying insects were seen on the ground; monsters appeared in the rivers and lakes, and phosphorescence on the earth. There was also noise and wailing in the bowels of the earth. Some lambs were born deformed. Arrogance increased--which always comes just before a fall. Many honorable men had dreams of what was to come. (Steingrímsson 2002, 178-79)]

In the above quote it is stated that many dreams were dreamt by honourable men, indicating that the information the dreams conveyed could be trusted. Dur-

ing the subsequent five years, Jón Steingrímsson himself continued to dream dreams, all of which pointed to the coming volcanic eruption. In one of them a stranger appeared, and Jón asked his name. The man said that he is called Eldríðagrímur ("Grímur who rides on fire"), and that he had come once before, in the year 1112. Jón Steingrímsson looked up the year 1112 in the annals, and found that a volcanic eruption and an enormous lava flow had taken place that year. In another dream, different in style, a man told Jón Steingrímsson that he was no use to his parishioners, if he continued preaching the way he did. The man advised him to preach instead from the thirtieth chapter of the book of Isaiah. The chapter is a prophecy, predicting the fate of people whose ethical conduct is in opposition to God's laws and rules; God will save those who put their faith in him, but punish those who despise his words and trust in oppression and perversity. Jón Steingrímsson followed the advice of the dream man, and adjusted his sermons. The dream accounts of Jón Steingrímsson illustrate that in the eighteenth century, too, dreams were an accepted source of knowledge that provided guidelines for action among the common people and the clergy. Dreams might be interpreted by the dreamer, but dreams are often told to others. Jón Steingrímsson told the dream to his wife, because, as is noted in his autobiography, she was nearby when he awoke. Her interpretation not only reveals the fate of the dreamer, but also of herself and the parish of which Jón Steingrímsson is a reverend. In other cases, "dream-wise" persons, people who have a reputation for knowing how to interpret dreams, are asked for advice.

The second main development which can be traced in the dream accounts after the Reformation is that dreams, considered important means for coming into contact with other realms, become testimonies of Christian devotion. Often these dreams are called *draumvitranir* or just *vitranir* (sing. *vitrun*), meaning epiphanies. *Vitrun* originates from *vit*, meaning "sense" or "intellect". These dreams or revelations are received during sleep, in a condition between waking and sleeping, or in a dreamy state of the waking mind. They often include the singing of herdsmen or angels, and the appearance of Christ. These draumvitranir are found in several manuscripts included in the collection of the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík. The epiphanies appear in compilations, together with stories, letters, religious notes, reproductions of the sagas, etc. Examples are numerous: The manuscript, *Sjóðurinn*, is a compilation of several records gathered by Sighvatur Grímsson in the period from 1879 to 1887. It contains the following visions and dream revelations: *Draumvitran Kristjáns Oddssonar sem hann dreymdi þegar hann var á Kirkjubóli í Fífustaðadal* ("The dream vision of Kristján Oddsson, which he dreamt when he was at Kirjubóli in Fífustaðada", 18r-9v); *Draumur Hávarðs Loftssonar á Ásgarði í Landbroti* ("The dream of Hávarðr Loftsson of Ásgarður in Landbroti", 9v-13r); *Eftirfylgjandi teikn skeðu á Kirkjubæjarklaustri eftir þessa vitran sem áður er skrifuð* ("The following sign occurred at Kirkjubæjarklaustri after the vision which has been written down previously", 13v-14r); *Draumvitran Ólafs Oddssonar 1. desember 1627*, "The dream of Ólaf Oddsson" December 1, 1627, 14r-

15v): *Draumur Guðrúnar Sveinsdóttur á Innsta-Vogi* ("The dream of Guðrún Sveinsdóttir of Innsta-Vogi", 15v-16v); *Sú dýrlega sjón og draumvitran síra Magnúsar Péturssonar* ("The glorious vision of dream revelation of the Reverend Magnús Pétursson") and *Draumur Guðrúnar Brandsdóttur: Draumur Guðrúnar Brandsdóttur á Stagley* ("A dream of Guðrún Brandsdóttir: a dream of Guðrún Brandsdóttir of Stagley", 9v-21r). The last two dreams and vision also appear in a manuscript bearing the title *Samtíningur*, but with an addition to the title of the latter: *Draumur Guðrúnar Brandsdóttur: Einn undarlegur draumur sem skeði árið 1702* ("A dream of Guðrún Brandsdóttir: one peculiar dream, which occurred in the year 1702").

No sharp division exists between *vitranir* and *draumur*. *Vitran séra Magnúsar Péturssonar*, for example, describes various experiences of the Reverend Magnús Pétursson. The narrative, given in rhyme, starts off on the gloomy night of December 19, 1728 with a vision: Magnús Pétursson leaves his house on horseback. Then, all of a sudden, he sees a very bright light in the sky, and an old man appears with white hair and a beard, a radiating crown on his head, and a sorrowful expression. The man has a naked child in his arms. Blood flows from the child's arms. Then, the image disappears. Magnús Pétursson rides home and goes to bed. Then he states that, while lying in bed, he closes his eyes another time, and again receives a dream vision. This indicates that the first vision was also a dream. While the second dream follows the common dream sequence, starting off with a man who visits Magnús Pétursson at his bedside, the text of the first dream vision is constructed in such a way that it seems as if we directly enter the third phase of the dream sequence. There is no mention of Magnus Pétursson falling asleep. Without introduction, we are confronted with the movement of the dreamer to another place, where he experiences the revelation. The lack of a division between dream and vision is related to the fact that these experiences are not of different kinds, but vary in degree. Both dreams and visions enable people to engage with parallel temporal and spatial realms. While dreaming is a means to which everyone has access, visions only come to those who are sensitive to the influences of other realms.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Folk tales recorded during the nineteenth, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, reflect ideas existing in earlier periods. Dreaming, as a means of contacting hidden spheres, is a common theme of the folk tales. An example is Kötludraumur ("the Dream of Katla"), a popular folk legend of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which exists in several versions (Sigurðsson 1995). The version which I present here derives from the collection of folk tales by Jón Árnason[9] (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 59). Kötludraumur deals with a married woman named Katla, who sleeps for four days and is ap-

9 See chapter 4 for a discussion of huldufólk in dream accounts.

proached in her dreams by a woman of the hidden people . Huldufólk are beings resembling humans, who are usually invisible to the waking mind, and who have their houses in rocks and hills. The woman of the huldufólk comes to the bed in which Katla is sleeping, and asks Katla to follow her to her world. Katla accepts the invitation. In the world of the huldufólk, Katla becomes pregnant by Kári, the son of the hidden woman who invited her in the first place. After a few days, the woman leads Katla home again. When Katla leaves, Kári says goodbye to her, gives her gifts for their coming son, and asks her to give their son his name. He also asks Katla to tell her human husband about what has happened. Kári encourages her to move with her husband to a farm at a certain place, and says that Katla and her human husband will have many famous descendants. Then Katla leaves, and with much noise, Kári bursts from grief. As waking life is thought to be continuous with the dreaming world, Katla's pregnancy in the dream is a fact in waking life. When she awakens, Már, her human husband who was away, returns home. He is eager to know why Katla does not approach him the way she used to. He encourages Katla to tell him what has happened. She relates the events she experienced while asleep, and shows him the presents she has received from the huldufólk for her coming son. When her son is born, Már receives him kindly, and acts as the boy's father. The boy receives the name "Kári". Már and Katla move their home to the place indicated by Kári. Their life is fortunate and loving (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 59). Kötludraumur illustrates that the dreaming and the waking realms are continuous. A child, gifts, and knowledge of the future move from the dreaming to the waking realm. The tale describes how dreaming and waking life, hidden and human life, merge in the birth of a child. I will further discuss these relations of exchange in chapter 4.

During the first part of the nineteenth century, a greater variety of what was seen as secular literature became available to the common people. This literature was read aloud at *kvöldvökur*, evening gatherings of members of a household in the main room, the *baðstofa*. I came across a quotation by Magnús Helgason (b. 1857), the great-great-grandfather of the man on whose farm I spent the summer of 2001. Magnús sums up the kind of literature they read during those evenings: *Íslendingasögur* (for example, they read *Njáls saga* every winter), *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, *Noregskonungasögur*, *Knýtlinga saga*, *Jómsvíkinga saga*, *Íslenzkur þjóðsögur og ævintýri*, *A Thousand and One Nights*, *Piltur og stúlka*, *Riddarasögur*, and *Skírnir*, a journal of Icelandic literature, language, and history, which still exists (Gíslason 1977, 98).

Also with regard to these more recent sources, the question has been posed concerning the extent to which the presence of dream accounts in the folk tales and other literature reflects a living tradition of dream sharing in the society of that time. According to the Icelandic ethnologist, Árni Björnsson, there is no direct relation between "text" and "life". He writes:

> The reason there exists the idea that there is a shared folk belief among Icelanders, is the wealth of folk tales of all different kinds, but folk tales do not have to be evidence of a common living folk belief. They are, rather, diversions, oral entertainment, amusement and education for children, warnings, fun, examples, philosophy, poetry, and aesthetics. The pioneers who initially collected stories, oral traditions, and other common knowledge and amusement, were aware of this. (Björnsson 1996, 85, m.t.)

One of these pioneers to whom Árni Björnsson refers is Jón Árnason. In the same article, Árni Björnsson quotes a part of an epilogue meant for Jón Árnason's collection of folktales, published in 1864. Jón was said to have been delayed in delivering his text, therefore an epilogue written by Konrad Maurer was used instead.[10] Jón Árnason's attitude towards the stories he collected is expressed in this quotation:

> I am convinced that no one is so blind as to believe those stories that go from man to man, detached from reality, wrong in many ways, just some literature . . . We are all familiar with misunderstandings, mirages, and dreams, as well as with the natural power strong words can have, and how a story may be created from almost nothing. (Árnason 1864 in Björnsson 1996, 85, m.t.)

I consider these the words of a nineteenth century scholar who was eager to present Iceland to the outside world as a society wherein logic and rationality dominate over "superstition". Árni Björnsson admits that, often, in other countries as well, Christian scholars avoided upholding the idea that their fellow countrymen were "superstitious". However, he argues that particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as at this very moment, Icelanders show more interest in transcendental phenomena than during other centuries (Björnsson 1996, 91). Árni Björnsson endorses the idea commonly found among scholars, that *Sturlunga saga*, as well as the *Biskupasögur*, are important sources for the spiritual life of Icelanders. He states that neither of them contain examples of huldufólk or the dead. He finds only one example of a dead person appearing to the living. On the other hand, he admits that there are many references to dreams, predictions, and revelations, which are also well-known from the other Old Norse sources (ibid., 87).

In my opinion, folk belief is not the opposite of "diversion, oral entertainment, amusement and education for children, warnings, fun, examples, philosophy, poetry, and aesthetics" (ibid., 85). Entertainment is a field in which people investigate the boundaries of their own beliefs, and those of others. Uncertainty

10 Terry Gunnell suggests that Jón Árnason's epilogue was deliberately left out (Gunnell 2000, no page numbers).

about perception and knowledge, which the experience of dreams and vision evokes, often goes hand in hand with humour. As Jean-Claude Schmitt notes (1994, 7): "A belief is a never completed activity, one that is precarious, always questioned, and inseparable from recurrences of doubt." Icelanders might explore dreams and other experiences of parallel realms within the context of humour. They often inspire entertaining narratives. Nevertheless, in moments of crisis and grief, dreams are valued for making sense of the incomprehensible, and can serve as guidance.

Árni Björnsson's argument is based on an assumed opposition of folk belief and modernity. The association of folk belief with false science, traditionalism, and the old peasant society has been dominant among the Icelandic (academic) elite. In different periods, Icelanders have stated that Icelandic folk belief was vanishing, precisely because it was seen as opposed to rationality, progress, and development. For example, Magnus Stephensen, who also criticised the rímur, noted at the end of the eighteenth century that belief in *draugar* (the dead who seek the living) had almost died out (Stephensen 1808, 245). Jónas Jónasson frá Hrafnagili stated, at the beginning of the twentieth century, that not only was the belief in draugar on its way to extinction, but so was Icelandic folk belief in general, except, perhaps, in very remote and isolated areas (Jónasson frá Hrafnagili 1934, 389). During my fieldwork, I met several people who were convinced that folk belief would disappear because of scientific and technological developments. These are expressions of the assumption that folk belief and related practices address the same kinds of problems as modern science, and hence are inferior and pre-modern (cf. Kapferer 2003, 5). The narration of dreams is not antagonistic to modernity, but a part of it, as it was previously integrated with a Christian view of the world. Icelandic "folk belief", with its dynamic nature, still exists, addressing different issues and appearing in different social contexts than modern science.

Concluding remarks

Dream accounts play, and have played, a significant role in both literature and society throughout Iceland's history. While certain dreams may be classified as unimportant, day residues, or entertainment, in principal, dreaming is valued as a means of revealing temporal or spatial realms which are hidden from people in waking life. The nature of these realms, and the beings inhabiting them, may vary from period to period and from person to person. Some dreamers claim to have observed the pagan gods, while to others the Christian God or Jesus appeared. Again, others have, while dreaming, engaged with huldufólk or the dead. In the sources, the existence of hidden realms is emphasised by the dreamer's ability to bring something from these realms to the waking world. This can be knowledge, as in the dream of Jón Steingrímsson, which predicted the volcanic eruption of Lakagígar, objects, such as the tooth of Fafnir in Skíðaríma (Homan 1975); or a child, as in Kötludraumur (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 59). In Old Norse literature, the focus is on

dreams that reveal the fate of the dreamer or those persons in his or her direct environment. In later sources, coming events are also revealed, but often it is the contact with hidden realms and interaction with huldufólk, the dead, or other beings, which is central. These beings may demand something from humans, comment on actions humans undertake, or explain why events in waking life happen the way they do. Thus, dreams have primarily the role of sense making.

The overview I have presented here indicates that the idea of dreaming as providing a gateway to other temporal and spatial realms has been prevalent over time. Christianity, foreign influence, and modernisation have brought changes in Icelandic society, but not obliterated its dreaming philosophy and practices. Attempts to "enlighten" people have met, and still meet with resistance.[11] The fact that dream accounts in the written sources were available to people during all periods may have contributed to keeping the practice of recounting and interpreting dreams alive throughout history. It has also served to legitimize the narration of dreams in contexts in which it is uncommon to do so. Additionally, the sharing of dreams is thoroughly embedded in Icelandic cosmology, but dreams are also shared in order to, consciously or unconsciously, negotiate positions in society, to resist existing structures, and to conceal or put forward motivations for actions. The integration of practice and cosmology should not be seen as being of a contradictory nature. As Susan Reynolds Whyte (1997, 3) has argued: "the dichotomy between an anthropology of practical reason in which actors are involved in solving problems and realizing values, and an anthropology of culture that examines patterns of communication and meaning in social life is a false one, because problems are always engaged in terms of social meanings."

11 An example of resistance in contemporary society is the discussion between the Icelandic Lutheran Church and those who believe in healing through contact with the dead (see chapter 7).

Chapter 3 Animal Images

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I discussed examples from the Old Norse literature which illustrate the idea that the soul or spirit could materialize in animal form. It is written in the "Angling saga" that Óðinn was able to change himself into various animals ("Ynglinga saga" in *Heimskringla* 1946, I, 9), and Hörðr's spirit turned into a humpback whale and engaged in a fight with the whale spirit of King Hundingr, in "Hjalmters ok Ölvers saga" ("Hjalmters ok Ölvers" saga in *Fornaldar Sögur Norðrlanda* 1830, III, 506-507). Animals frequently appear, not only in the early dream accounts, but also in the modern material. In order to grasp the significance of animals in modern Icelandic dream practice, and to get an indication of the degree to which certain symbols, and the meanings attached to them, are shared in Icelandic society, I developed a database. This database consists of dream symbols and--to use Victor Turner's term--the exegetical meanings (Turner 1967, 51) which Icelanders explicitly ascribe to these symbols. The material from which I extracted the symbols is derived from my field notes and from the interviews which I conducted during my fieldwork in Reykjavík and Hrunamannahreppur; from the ethnological collection of the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík, and from the answers to questionnaire number sixty-one, *Draumar, fyrirburðir, spádómar* ("Dreams, phenomena, and prophecies"), sent out in March of 1985, by the Ethnological Department of the National Museum of Iceland. Of the 554 dream symbols of which my database consists, 123 can be classified as animals, including mammals, birds, insects, and fish. The actual number of animal images in the material is even larger, as not all animals appear as symbols in dream accounts.

This chapter will present a discussion of animal images. I use the term "animal image" to include beings that appear as animals, but are of a different kind, such as animal *fylgjur*. Animal fylgjur are considered to be the inseparable counterparts of living persons, and are mainly found in Old Norse literature. The aim of this chapter is twofold: First, to grasp how dream interpretation works, by discussing one of the most important meaning-bearing elements; and, secondly, to provide a comparison between animal images as they appear in dream accounts found in Old Norse literature dating from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, and animal images in dream accounts dating from the latter part of the nineteenth century onwards. This comparison not only sheds light on the ways in which the practice of dream sharing has changed over time, while the general conceptualisation of dreaming as revealing hidden spheres has persisted, it also gives insight into the ways these variations in meaning-bearing elements of dream sharing reflect more general changes in Icelandic cosmology. In other words, the relations between the practice of sharing dreams and cosmological conceptualisations are laid bare.

Fylgjur in Old Norse literature

In the Old Norse literature, animal images are often presented as the accompanying counterparts of living persons, and are then described with the word *fylgja* as explained by Kelchner:

> The Fetch is the inherent soul, the accompanying counterpart or representation, of a living person. Usually invisible, it may, nevertheless, be seen in dreams and visions, almost always in the form of an animal. The possession of a fetch is universal, and its character coincides, in some salient feature or features, with the qualities and characteristics of the person to whom it belongs, or, especially in cases of hostility, with the attitude of its owner toward the dreamer. (Kelchner 1935, 17)

In contrast to Kelchner, I will use the Icelandic terms *fylgja* (f. nom. sing.) and *fylgjur* (f. nom. pl.) instead of "fetch", to avoid misleading associations. Etymologically, *fylgja* might be related to the verb *fylgja* ("to follow"). However, several scholars have argued for a connection between *fylgja* and the Old Norse *folga*, meaning "thin covering" or "membrane", and the Icelandic *fulga*, "thin covering of hay", again related to the Icelandic verb *fela*, "to hide" (Turville-Petre 1972, 55 and 1964, 228; Falk and Torp 1903, I, 205). Etymologically and ethnologically, *fylgja*, in its meaning of membrane, is associated with the afterbirth, especially the amnion. *Fylgja* or *barnsfylgja* (the *fylgja* of the child) means "afterbirth" in Icelandic (Falk and Torp 1903, I, 205; *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og sagnir*, III, 1922-1925, 235-36; Jónasson frá Hrafnagili 1934, 261; *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri*, I, 1954-1961, 340-41; de Vries 1956, I, 224; Turville-Petre 1972, 54). Turville-Petre argues that in Iceland a newborn child was considered to be "incomplete" until the afterbirth was expelled (Turville-Petre 1972, 54). Jónas Jónasson (1934, 261) suggests that, before Christianity, the *barnsfylgja* was considered to be sacred, because a part of a child's "soul" was assumed to be situated in the amnion. According to him, the afterbirth was often buried in the ground and rocks and stones were put on top of it, in order to prevent animals from digging it up. If an animal ate it, the animal would follow the child as fylgja. If the afterbirth was burned, the child received a fylgja in the form of lights and stars (Jónasson frá Hrafnagili 1934, 261). Jónas Jónasson is not always precise in indicating the period in which the practices and beliefs he describes are found. Now and then, the ideas and customs which he discusses contradict each other, probably because they prevailed in different time periods and are based on various sources. This would also explain why Jon Árnason, one of the most important collectors of Icelandic folk tales, contradicts Jónas Jónasson, writing that if the afterbirth is burned or eaten by an animal, the child will lose its fylgja (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 355; cf. Turville-Petre 1972, 54).

The temporal divergence between the birth of the child and the afterbirth continues to characterize the relationship between persons and their fylgja in later stages of life, even though time is reversed. Both in the early and modern material, a fylgja can be perceived because of its appearance at a certain place shortly before its human counterpart arrives. In the Old Norse literature, the inseparable connection between human beings and their fylgja has two implications: When a fylgja dies, its human counterpart will also die, and a fylgja's intentions and behaviour correspond to those of its counterpart (Mundal 1974, 38-39). Thus, even though the time interval between the appearance of a fylgja and the arrival of its human counterpart might be only a few minutes, perceiving a fylgja means a disclosure of events in the near future. The fylgja is observed in dreams or felt in waking life before its counterpart appears. The following example derives from "Atlamál in grænlenzku" ("The Greenland Lay of Atli"), a heroic poem belonging to *Eddukvæði* (*Konungsbók*), which probably was written around 1100:

Örn hugða ek hér inn fljúga
at endlöngu húsi,
þat mun oss drjúgt deilask,
dreifði hann oss öll blóði,
hugða ek af heitum
at væri hamr Atla.
("Atlamál in grænlenzku" in Eddukvæði 1998, 332)

[I thought I saw an eagle fly in here,
all along the house,
something terrible will happen to us,
he sprinkled us all with blood
I thought from its threatening noise
that it was the spirit of Atli.
("Atlamál in grænlenzku" in The Poetic Edda 1996, 220)]

This dream is said to be dreamt by a woman named Kostbera. She dreams of an eagle that attacks and sprinkles her husband and her with blood. Kostbera concludes from its shape that the eagle must be *hamr Atla*, the shape of King Atli. *Hamr*, meaning "skin", "covering" or "shape", is another word for *fylgja*. Similar to fylgja, the word *ham* also means--in addition to "skin"--"afterbirth", in Norwegian dialect (Falk and Torp 1903, I: 269; Turville-Petre 1972, 56). The above-mentioned dream of Kostbera is interpreted as predicting the killing of her husband by the hand of King Atli, his brother-in-law. Once the behaviour of a fylgja is observed, either in dreams or visions, there is no way of escaping events. The human counterpart will behave in a similar way to the fylgja, as they share the same destiny (Mundal 1974, 39). Thus, the concept of the fylgja should be considered within the context of the prevailing concept of destiny.

The Old Norse sources illustrate that fate is not only disclosed through observing fylgjur in dreams. The presence of the fylgjur of enemies is typically manifested physically, as a feeling of drowsiness (e.g., see "Þórðar saga Kakala" in *Sturlunga saga* 1946, II:287; "Brennu-Njáls saga" in *ÍF*, XII, 1954, 37; Þórðar saga Hreðu in *ÍF*, XIV, 1959, 195). For example, in "Þórðar saga Hreðu", from the late fourteenth century, it is written:

> Þeir [Þórðr og Einar] riðu til Arnarstapa og áðu þar. Þórður kvað sér svefnhöfugt og kvað sækja að sér ófriðarfylgjur.
> ("Þórðar saga Hreðu" in ÍF, XIV, 1959, 195)

> [They [Thord and Einar] rode on to Arnarstapi, and rested there. Thord said that he was tired, and that the fetches of his enemies were pursuing him.
> ("The Saga of Thord Menace" in The Complete Sagas of Icelanders, III, 1997, 379)]

"Þórðar saga Hreðu" recounts the life of Þórður (Thord), a powerful man with ambitions of chieftaincy, who was born in Norway. When Þórður arrives in Iceland, he comes into conflict with Skeggi of Miðfjörður, a chieftain who is jealous of Þórður's success and popularity. Events turn out in such a way that Þórður kills Ormur, Skeggi's nephew. The fylgjur which Þórður notices, because of a sudden feeling of fatigue, are the fylgjur of men who seek vengeance for Ormur's death. While one's fate cannot be escaped when one dreams of a deadly attack by enemy fylgjur, observing or feeling the presence of fylgjur still leaves room for action. Þórður engages in many battles, as the presence of the fylgjur indicates, but survives.

In "Brennu-Njáls saga", too, an example can be found of the actions undertaken after the presence of enemy fylgjur is noticed:

> Nú tók Svanr til orða ok geispaði mjög: "Nú sækja at fylgjur Ósvífrs' Þá spratt Þjóstólfr upp ok tók øxi sína. Svanr mælti: "Gakk þú út með mér; lítils mun við þurfa." Síðan gengu þeir út báðir. Svanr tók geitskinn eitt ok veifði yfir höfuð sér ok mælti:
>
> Verði þoka
> ok verði skrípi
> ok undr öllum þeim
> er eptir þér sækja.
>
> Nú er frá því at segja, at þeir Ósvifr ríðu á hálsinn ok menn hans. Þá kom þoka mikil í móti þeim. Ósvífr mælti: "Þessu mun Svanr valda, ok væri vel, ef eigi fylgði meira illt." ("Brennu-Njáls saga" in ÍF, XII, 1954, 39)

[Just then Svan had a yawning attack and declared, "Osvif's fetches are coming this way." Thjostolf leaped up and took his axe.
Svan said, "Come outside with me. We're not in great need."
They went both outside. Svan took a goatskin and wrapped it around his head and said,

Let there be fog,
And let there be monsters,
And weird sights to those
who pursue you.

To return to Osvif and his men: they were riding over the ridge and a great fog came toward them. Osvif said, "This must be Svan's doing--we'll be well off if nothing worse follows." ("Njál's Saga" in The Complete Sagas of Icelanders, III, 1997, 16-17)]

As this quote from "Brennu-Njáls saga" illustrates, the fatigue experienced by the person under attack, caused by being sought out by enemy fylgjur, is called *aðsókn* (attendance), here conveyed in the verb *sækja að*. The feeling of drowsiness may be so strong that the person concerned has difficulties defending himself. Thus, drowsiness is not only a clear indication of the presence of fylgjur, it may also indicate an attack. For example, in "Þórðar saga Kakala", part of *Sturlunga saga*, it is written that a man called Hallur was strongly advised to flee, by his mother-in-law. She could tell that enemy fylgjur were near. Hallur answered that he had become very sleepy, and when he tried to stand, he dropped with fatigue. A few moments later, the farm was attacked and Hallur was killed ("Þórðar saga Kakala" in *Sturlunga saga* 1946, II, 287).[1] Also,

1 Sturlunga saga, of which "Þórðar saga Kakala" is part, is available in two incomplete manuscripts: Króksfjarðarbók (AM 122a fol.) from the late fourteenth century, and Reykjarfjarðarbók (AM 122b fol.), compiled slightly later (Guðrún Nordal 2006, 304). Chapter twenty-five, which relates the killing of several men by the hand of Kolbeinn, varies significantly in the two manuscripts. The example I present here, from "Þórðar saga Kakala", on the consequences of the presence of enemy fylgjur to Hallur's condition, is found in Króksfjarðarbók, but not in Reykjarfjarðarbók. Guðrún Nordal has analysed the dream sequences in these two versions of Sturlunga saga, and presented the results in a conference paper "To dream or not to dream: a question of method" (Guðrún Nordal 2006). While Sturlunga saga is appreciated as being a report of contemporary Icelandic political life during the thirteenth century, Guðrún Nordal suggests that two main dream sequences belong to a fourteenth-century retelling of events which happened in the thirteenth century, as presented in Króksfjarðarbók. In her opinion, the dream sequences do not belong to the contemporary sagas on which the compiler based his work, nor to the Reykjarfjarðarbók, written in Skagafjörður, in the late fourteenth century (ibid.). The other example I present, of enemy fylgjur, from "Brennu-Njáls

nightmares or a fitful sleep are sometimes interpreted as aðsókn, in both the Old Norse sources and in present-day Iceland. In the modern material, aðsókn is often interpreted as an attempt by the dead to communicate with someone who is asleep (see, for example ÞÞ 07003 61).

These examples convey how the body is not conceived as a bounded entity, in which feelings, emotions, and thoughts are encapsulated. Rather, spirit (breath), wishes, intentions, emotions, and thoughts are able to transcend the boundaries of the body, and are manifested in the physical condition of the subject. The Old Icelandic concept of *hugr* (pl. *hugir*), which can be translated as "spirit", "thought", "wish", and "longing" (de Vries 1956, 220), is crucial in this context (cf. Strömbäck 1975). Hugir are, in the Old Norse literature, materialised in animal form, but in contrast to fylgjur, they represent the intention of persons in standardised images. Several scholars (de Vries 1956; Strömbäck 1975, 5-23; Alver 1989, 110-27; Heide 2006, 353) have found parallels to the Old Norse concept of hugr in later folk practices and beliefs in Sweden and Norway. In his paper, "Spirits through Respiratory Passages", presented at the Thirteenth Saga Conference, in 2006, Heide notes that:

> In Dalarna (Dalecarlia) in Sweden, the verb *hugsa*, meaning "to think about", also means "through one's thoughts make someone ill or sick". Etymologically, the verb *hugsa* means "to send one's mind or thoughts (*hug*) to the object one is thinking of", so the idea behind the sickness effect is probably that the mind (*hug*) of the thinker goes to the object being thought about and causes a physical effect there. In Norwegian, *å ha hug på noko* means "to want something", literally "to have the mind on something". One's mind goes to the object of desire. In popular belief, if somebody gets sick, the reason may be that someone wants his property, expressed as someone "*har hug på*" the property. (Heide 2006, 353)

In the Old Norse literature, hugir appear often as wolves and vixens, bringing to life the intentions of enemies who plan an attack (cf. Kelchner 1935, 25; de Vries 1956, 220-22; Mundal 1974, 31-32; Strömbäck 1975, 5-23). Hugir can be found in "Harðar saga Grímkelssonar (*ÍF*, XIII, 75-77)"; "Þórðar saga Hreðu" (*ÍF*, XIV, 1954, 179, 201-02) and "Hávarðs saga Ísfirðings" (*ÍF*, VI, 1943, 349-50). The example of "Hávarðar Saga Ísfirðings", written in the fifteenth century, goes as follows:

> Nú er þar til at taka, hvat þeir hafask at heima í Otradal. Þeir sofa í útibúrinu um nóttina, sem þeir áttu vanða til. Um morguninn vakna þeir við þat, at Atli lét illa í svefni, svá at engi þeira mátti fyrir sofa,

---

saga" originates from a publication based on a manuscript (GKS 2870 4to) written at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

því at hann brauzk um ok blés ok barði bæði höndum ok fótum í sænginni, þar til er Torfi Valbrandsson hljóp upp ok vakði hann ok sagði, at engi mætti sofa fyrir honum ok látum hans. Atli sezk upp ok strauk um skallann. Hávarðr spyrr, hvárt nökkut hefði borit fyrir hann. Hann kvað heldr þat vera--"eg þóttumk ganga út ór búrinu, ok sá ek at vargar runnu sunnan á völlinn átján saman, en fyrir vörgunum rann refkeila ein; Þat var svá slægligt kvikendi, at slíkt hefi ek aldri sét fyrri; þat var ógurligt mjök ok illiligt. Þat skyggndisk víða, ok á öllu vildi þat augu hafa, ok öll sýndusk mér dýrin grimmlig. En er þau váru komin heim at bænum, þá vakði Torfi mik, ok veit ek víst, at þat er manna hugir; skulum vér þegar upp standa."
("Hávarðs saga Ísfirðings" in *ÍF*, VI, 1943, 349-50)

[Now we turn to what was happening back in Otradal. It was their custom to sleep in the storehouse at night. On that morning they woke up because Atli was tossing so in his sleep that no one else could sleep, for he thrashed around and sighed and banged his feet and hands against the bed until Torfi Valbrandsson leapt up and waked him and said that no one was able to sleep because of him and his noise. Atli sat up and rubbed his bald head. Havard asked whether he had dreamt anything strange.

He said that this was true--"I dreamt that I walked out of the storehouse and I saw eighteen wolves running together from the south into the field, and in front of the wolves ran a vixen. It was such a cunning animal that I have not seen its like before. It was very awful and evil. It looked around carefully, taking in everything, and all the animals seemed to me very fierce. And just as they reached the farm, Torfi waked me, and I know for certain that they were the spirits of men. Let us get up immediately."
(The Saga of Havard of Isafjord in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders* 1997, V:342-43)]

In "Hávarðs saga Ísfirðings", the hugir appear in a manner typical of the Old Norse literature: Atli tosses in his sleep, indicating that he is engaged in other realms, and that his dream forebodes danger in waking life. However, this quotation also shows the unusual act of waking a person who sleeps restlessly, for the reason that the others present cannot sleep. My suggestion is that this is related to the fact that the saga was composed later, namely in the fifteenth century. The first four chapters resemble the other sagas in style, but the saga then develops into a parody. The editor of the Icelandic version of 1896, used here, and based on a manuscript from the seventeenth century, argues that this difference in style is caused by the many changes the saga had undergone since its original version. The introduction to the English translation by Fredrik J. Heinemann, from 1997, also notes that "Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings" differs from

others sagas in being a parody, which is related to its late composition. Even though in the folk tales and in present day Iceland we still encounter the idea that persons should be allowed to finish their dreams, the quote suggests that in fifteenth century Iceland, at a time when Christianity had been the dominant religion for more than four hundred years, conceptions of the soul and dreaming had undergone some changes.

Several anthropologists have pointed out that the Western notion of the individual falls short, when attempting to comprehend conceptions of personhood in various parts of the world (see e.g., Dumont 1985; Wagner 1986; Strathern 1988; Barraud 1994; Niehaus 2002; Mageo 2003; Kirtsoglou 2010). Marilyn Strathern's concept of "dividual" (1988, 9), the relational person, has probably been most influential as a critique of Western notions of personhood within anthropology. This critique is not only valuable when discussing societies that are spatially removed from Europe and North America, but also for those that are temporally distant, such as early Iceland. The Old Norse concepts of *hugr* and *fylgja*, and the meanings ascribed to conditions of sleeping and dreaming, not only deviate from modern European assumptions of the relationship between body and soul, they also confront the conceptualisation of the soul as immaterial, and the body as a material entity. Mundal (1974, 43) writes: "Dyrefylgja er ei ytre sjel som mennesket har i tillegg til kroppsjela" ("The animal fylgja is an external soul, which humans possess in addition to the soul enclosed in their bodies, m.t."). Thus, the early Icelandic literature indicates the existence of multiple "souls" or spirits: a spirit associated with the afterbirth, originating from an organic entity, attached but external to the person's body, while another spirit is found enclosed in the person. At death, the body does not disintegrate while the spirits live on--as Christian teachings would postulate--but the living change into animated corpses. De Vries has described this in the following way for the Old Norse literature:

> Die Seele des lebenden Menschen ist etwas ganz anderes als der Geist eines Totem. Was ja der lebenden Seele ihren eigentümlichen Charakter verleiht, die sich immer fortzeugende Lebenskraft, fehlt dem Totengeist, der in irgendeiner Gestalt nur der Tote selbst ist. Mit vielleicht etwas scharfer Überspitzung hat W. F. Otto diesen Gegensatz formuliert und er bemerkt mit Hinsicht auf den Totengeist, daß er dasjenige ist, was nach dem Tode als Schatten weiterlebt, der ganze Mensch, nicht ein Teil von ihm, sei es auch der wichtigste. Was dieses Wesen vom lebendigen Körper unterscheidet, ist die mangelhafte Dichtigkeit der materiellen Substanz, und vor allem das Fehlen der „Seele", d.h. eben desjenigen, was die animistische Theorie in ihm selbst wiederzuerkennen zu müssen glaubte: Es ist ein seelenloser Körper in „vergeistigtem" Zustande. (de Vries 1956, I, 228-29)

> [The soul of a living person is something completely different from the soul of a deceased person. While the living soul receives its distinct character through its generative vitality, the dead soul is, in any form, only the dead person himself. W.F. Otto formulated this contrast perhaps somewhat more sharply. He noted, with regard to the dead spirit, that it is most significant that the whole person, and not only a part, continues to live after death, as a shade. The way this being is distinguished from the living body is through its lack of density in material substance, and, especially, the absence of the "soul", namely the absence of precisely that which the animistic theory believed should be recognised in the dead being: It is a soulless body in a "spiritual" condition. (m.t.)]

The concepts of hugr and fylgja belong to the realm of the living, and involve an almost fluid conceptualisation of the person as able to reach out in time and space. Thus, hugr and fylgja relate not only to a soul, which might be released from the body during physical conditions of dreaming and trance; rather, the movements of various parts of the self allow one to be in several places and times simultaneously. Time and space are compressed in the relationship between fylgja or hugr, and their human counterpart. The intentions of a person, directed towards another place or person at a certain moment in time, are immediately materialised at this place, influencing the physical condition on which attention is addressed. In this materialisation of intention (hugir) and movement (fylgja), present and future collide. Thus, according to the early Icelandic literature, dreaming and sleeping are not passive experiences cut off from daily life. They are social and cosmological engagements in which power relations are acted out, and knowledge of other times and places is gained. People do not construct their own dreams, but might be sought by hidden agents, the dead or the counterparts of others, and are drawn into other temporal and spatial realms. These persons can also impose conditions of sleeping and dreaming on others, through their fylgja or hugr. Thus, it is important to remember that the dream's message is not only conveyed through a narrative, but already at the moment the dream is dreamt, observers of the physical condition of the dreamer may receive insight into the dreamer's fate, or that of others.

The dream, as sensory experience, allows for the observation of the appearance of animals that act as fylgjur. The features of fylgjur often reflect the characteristics or social status of their human counterparts (Kelchner 1935, 17 and Sluijter 1936, 85). For example, people with powerful positions in society also have fylgjur that signify power. Animal images, which appear as fylgjur in the *Íslendingasögur*, the *Fornaldarsögur*, and the *Konungasögur*, are the ox, stag, fox, bear, polar bear, swan, eagle, hawk, falcon, unspecified birds, wolf, and serpent (for an overview, see Mundal 1974, 30-31). Swine, boar, leopard, lion, a hawk with golden feathers, and dragons appear only in the *Fornaldarsögur*, which are known for their foreign influence and mythical character (Kelchner

1935, 23-24). In "Vatnsdæla saga", a fylgja appears in the form of a horse (Vatnsdæla saga in *ÍF*, VIII, 1939, 110-11). In keeping with the violent events described in the sagas, the appearance of these animal images in dream accounts is, although interpreted variously, primarily an indication of coming danger. The prominent traits of animals seem to be decisive in their selection as fylgjur. These traits are not so much based on empirical observations of these animals, but rather on "what is known of them, what is said of them and what is believed about them" (Sperber 1975, 108). Since fylgjur are inherently counterparts of living humans, the message they signify is not completely standardised. Frequently, an animal fylgja of a given category behaves differently, when it is associated with various different persons, and their significance is thus ambiguous. An example involving bears is a dream recorded in "Þórðar saga Hreðu", in which a bear cub tries to protect Þórðr, who is attacked by a large pack of wolves (Þórðar saga Hreðu in *ÍF*, XIV, 1959, 179). In "Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar", Þorsteinn Víkingsson dreams of thirty wolves, eight bears, one of which has red jowls, and two vixens. They attack Þorsteinn, and although he kills all the wolves and the smaller vixen, he is defeated in the end ("Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar" 1829, 413-14). Bears have the prominent traits of being powerful and strong, but this power may be either dangerous or helpful to the dreamer, or to the people to whom the dream is thought to refer.

Birds of prey have similarly ambiguous meanings in the dream accounts. Their main traits are also power and strength, but this may indicate either danger or wealth. In the above example from "Átlamál in grænlenzka", the eagle was supposed to be the fylgja of King Atli, who intended to kill the husband of the dreamer. In "Völsunga saga", a woman named Guðrún dreams of a beautiful eagle with golden feathers. The eagle is the fylgja of her future husband ("Völsunga saga", in *FN*, I, 1959, 169-70).

Certain animal images appear in dream accounts as either fylgjur or as metaphors. An ox, for example, acts in "Vápnfirðinga saga" as fylgja. "Vápnfirðinga saga" was written in the late thirteenth century. The saga is reconstructed on the basis of one preserved vellum leaf from an early manuscript, and on later versions. The latter are assumed to originate from the same damaged manuscript, because they all have the same lacunae ("The Saga of the People of Vopnafjord" in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders* 1997, 313). Brodd-Helgi (or just plain 'Helgi') and Geitir are the two main figures in the saga. They are chieftains, related through marriage and good friends, but their greed turns them against each other. Brodd-Helgi has a foster-mother who is able to see into the future, and Brodd-Helgi frequently visits her to hear her premonitions. Once, when he visits her, he finds her crying. When he asks her why she is sad, she tells him that she dreamt a dream in which a fylgja appears, and she assumes that the dream reveals that Brodd-Helgi will be slain in an ambush by Geitir. Bjarni and Lýtingr are Brodd-Helgi's sons; Bjarni lived in Geitir's household as his foster son. It is Bjarni who seeks vengeance for his father, and is thereby forced to kill his own foster father, Geitir:

Þat segja sumir menn, at Helgi ætti fóstru framvísa, ok var hann vanr at finna hana jafnan, áðr hann fór heiman, ok svá gerði hann enn. Ok er hann kom til hennar, sat hon ok sá í gaupnir ksér og grét. Helgi spyrr, hví hon gréti eða hví henni væri svá skapþungt. Hon kvazk gráta drauma sína.
"Mig dreymdi þat," segir hon, "at ek sá hér upp rísa at Hofi uxa bleikan, mikinn ok skrautligan, ok bar hann hátt hornin, ok gekk hann á sandinn fram hjá Sunnudalsmynni. Enn sá ek fara naut útan eptir heraðinu, stór ok eigi allfá, ok gekk þar fyrir uxi rauðflekkóttr, ekki mikill né fagr, en allsterkligr var hann. Nautin stönguðu uxann til bana. Þá reis hér upp at Hofi rauðr uxi, ok var beinlitr á hornunum, ok var allra nauta skrautligastr. Sá stangaði rauðflekkótta uxann til bana. Þá reis upp í Krossavík þjórr nökkur, ok var sænautalitr á. Hann fór beljandi um allt heraðit ok allar heiðarnar og leitaði ávallt ins rauða uxans, enda vaknaða ek þá." "Þat muntu ætla," segir Helgi, "at ek muna eiga inn bleika uxann, en Geitir rauð-flekkóttan ok muni hann verða mér at bana."
"Þat ætla ek víst," kvað hon.
"Þat muntu ætla, at Lýtingr muni sá rauði uxinn ok muni hann hefna mín."
"Nei," sagði hon, "Bjarni mun hefna þín."
"Þá veiztu ekki til," segir hann, ok hljóp hann þá út reiðr . . . .
("Vápnfirðinga saga" in *ÍF*, XI, 1950, 48-49)

[Some say that Helgi had a prophetic foster-mother and that it was his custom always to seek her out before he left home, and he did so then. And when he came to her, she was sitting with her face in her hands, weeping. Helgi asked why she was weeping and why her spirits were so low. She said that she was weeping on account of her dream.
"I dreamed," she said, "that I saw a white ox, a magnificent, large beast with high horns, arise here at Hof; and he walked up to the sandbanks down by the entrance of the Sunnudal valley. But I saw cattle moving up through the district, large beasts and none too few of them, and before them went a red-flecked ox, that was neither large nor handsome, but very strong. The cattle gored the white ox to death. Then a red ox rose up here at Hof, and its horns were the colour of bone and it was the most splendid of all the cattle. He gored the red-flecked ox to death. Then a certain bull arose at Krossavik, and it was the colour of sea-cattle. It went bellowing through all the countryside and all the heaths, forever seeking the red ox until I awoke."
"It must mean," said Helgi, "that the white ox stands for me, but the red-flecked one for Geitir, and he will be my death."

"That is what I suppose," she said.
"It must mean that Lyting will be the red ox and he will avenge me."
"No," she said, "Bjarni will avenge you."
"Then you know nothing about it," he said, and then he stamped out furiously . . .
("The Saga of the People of Vopnafjord" in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders* 1997, 326)]

Bjarni, Brodd-Helgi, Geitir and his followers all have an ox as fylgja. The English translation from *The Complete Saga of Icelanders* says that "the ox stands for [Helgi]", while in the original Icelandic version the word *eiga* is used, meaning "to own" or "to possess". The latter thus indicates that the ox is the fylgja of Helgi. Thus, differences in the oxen's appearance resemble the ways in which their human counterparts differ from each other. An ox appears also in a dream in "Þáttr Ólafs Geirstaða Álfs" preserved in Flateyjarbók (ca. 1390), but here the ox is a symbol, and stands for an epidemic (Þáttr Ólafs Geirstaða Álfs 1835, 210-12). Again, the colour of the ox is important: because the ox is black, the epidemic is expected to be severe.

The multivocality of animal images, and of symbols in general, is amply exploited in dream accounts in Old Norse literature. Writers provide their public with several interpretations of a dream, while furnishing hints as to the right interpretation. Additionally, meaning-bearing elements receive a meaning in relation to other narrative elements. The appearance of a dream symbol, such as its colour or, in case of a living being, its actions or other specific features, are combined in the dream accounts with the mood, the physical conditions, the actions of the dreamer before and during sleep, and the knowledge and skills of the dream interpreters involved. It is not the dream symbol *an sich*, but the combination of all these variables by which messages are conveyed. Linked to this is the fact that symbols are multivocal, which makes way for the rhetorical function of dream accounts in Old Norse literature. The multiple meanings that are ascribed to certain symbols create tension in a story, and help to hold the attention of the reader or listener. Again, I want to point out that the knowledge of dream interpretation, which the authors in these cases assume their public to possess, reflects a practice of sharing dreams in society. If dreams were not shared in everyday life, the telling of dreams would never have been so powerful a rhetorical device.

A selection from "Gunnlaugs saga Ormstunga" ("The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue"), from the second half of the thirteenth century, illustrates the central position of the negotiation of meaning, and the importance of the narrative context for the transmission of meaning, when dreams are shared. In the text, quoted here, tension is created by providing several possible interpretations of a dream account, and information is added to hint at which interpretation of the dream is the right one:

Eitt sumar er þat sagt, at skip kom af hafi í Gufárós. Bergfinnr er nefndr stýrimaðr fyrir skipinu, norrænn at ætt, auðigr at fé ok heldr við aldr. Hann var vitr maðr. Þorsteinn bóndi reið til skips ok réð jafnan mestu, hver kaupstefna var, ok svá var enn. Austmenn vistuðusk, en Þorsteinn tók við stýrimanninum, fyrir því at hann beiddisk þangat. Bergfinnr var fátalaðr of vetrinn, en Þorsteinn veitti honum vel. Austmaðrinn hendi mikit gaman at draumum.

Um várit einn dag ræddi Þorsteinn um við Bergfinn, ef hann vildi ríða með honum upp undir Valfell ; þar var þá þingstð þeira Borgfirðinga; en Þorsteini var sagt, at fallnir væru búðarveggir hans. Austmaðrinn kvezk þat víst vilja, ok riðu þeir heiman of daginn þrír saman ok húskarl Þorsteins, þar til er þeir koma upp undir Valfell, til bæjar þess, er at Grenjum heitir. Þar bjó einn maður félítill, er Atli hét; hann var landseti Þorsteins, ok beiddi Þorsteinn Atla, at hann færi til starfs með þeim ok hefði pál ok reku; hann gerði svá. Ok er þeir koma til búðartóptanna, þá tóku þeir til starfs allir ok færðu út veggina. Veðrit var heitt af sólu, ok varð þeim Þorsteini ok Austmanni erfitt; ok er þeir höfðu út fært veggina, þá settisk Þorsteinn niðr ok Austmaður í búðartóptina, ok sofnaði Þorsteinn ok lét illa í svefni. Austmaðr sat hjá honum ok lét hann njóta draums síns, ok er hann vaknaði, var honum erfitt orðit.

Austmaðr spurði, hvat hann hefði dreymt, er hann lét svá illa í svefni. Þorsteinn svaraði: “Ekki er mark at draumum.” Ok er þeir riðu heim um kveldit, þá spyrr Austmaðr, hvat Þorstein hefði dreymt. Þorsteinn segir: “Ef ek segi þér drauminn, þá skaltu ráða hann, sem hann er til.” Austmaðr kvezk á þat hætta mundu. Þorsteinn mælti þá: “Þat dreymdi mik, at ek þóttumk heima vera at Borg ok úti fyrir karldurum ok sá ek upp á húsin ok á mæninum álpt eina væna ok fagra, og þóttumk ek eiga, ok þótti mér allgóð. Þá sá ek fljúga ofan frá fjöllunum örn mikinn; hann fló hingat ok settisk hjá álptinni ok klakaði við hana blíðliga ok hon þótti mér þat vel þekkjask. Þá sá ek, at örninn var svarteygr ok járnklær váru á honum; vaskligr sýndisk mér hann. Því næst sá ek fljúga annan fugl af suðrætt; sá fló hingat til Borgar ok settisk á húsin hjá álptinni ok vildi þýðask hana; þat var ok örn mikill. Brátt þótti mér sá örninn, er fyrir var, ýfask mjök, er hinn kom til, ok þeir börðusk snarpliga ok lengi, ok þat sá ek, at hvárumtveggja blæddi; ok svá lauk þeira leik, at sinn veg hné hvárr þeira af húsmæninum, ok váru þá báðir dauðir, en álptin sat eptir hnipin mjög ok daprlig. Ok þá sá ek fljúga fugl ór vestri; þat var valr; hann settisk hjá álptinni ok lét blítt við hana, ok síðan flugu þau í brott bæði samt í sömu ætt, ok þá vaknaða ek. Ok er draumr þessi ómerkiligr,” segir hann, “og mun vera fyrir veðrum, at þau mætask í lopti ór þeim ættum, er mér þóttu fuglarnir fljúga.” Austmaðr segir: “Ekki er þat mín ætlan," segir hann, “at svá sé.” Þorsteinn mælti: “Ger af drauminum, slíkt er þér sýnisk

líkligast, ok lát mik heyra." Austmaðr mælti: "Fuglar þeir munu vera manna fylgjur; en húsfreyja þín er eigi heil, ok mun hon fæða meybarn frítt ok fagrt, ok munt þú unna því mikit. En göfgir menn munu biðja dóttur þinnar ór þeim áttum, sem þér þóttu ernirnir fljúga at, ok leggja á hana ofrást ok berjask of hana ok látask báðir af því efni; ok því næst mun inn þriði maðr biðja hennar ór þeiri ætt, er valrinn fló at, ok þeim mun hon gipt vera. Nú hefi ek þýddan draum þinn og hygg eptir munu ganga."
Þorsteinn svarar: "Illa er draumr ráðinn ok óvingjarnliga," sagði hann, "ok munt þú ekki drauma ráða kunna." Austmaðr segir: "Þú munt at raun um komask, hversu eptir gengr." Þorsteinn lagði fæð á Austmanninn, ok fór hann á brott um sumarit, ok er hann nú ór sögunni. ("Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu" in *ÍF*, III, 1938, 52-55)

[It is said that, one summer, a ship came ashore in the Gufua estuary. The skipper was a Norwegian called Bergfinn, who was rich and rather getting on in years. He was a wise man. Farmer Thorstein rode down to the ship. He usually had the greatest say in fixing prices at the market, and that was the case again this time. The Norwegians found themselves lodgings, and Thorstein himself took the skipper in, since Bergfinn asked him if he could stay at his place. Bergfinn was rather withdrawn all winter, but Thorstein was very hospitable to him. The Norwegian was very interested in dreams.
One spring day, Thorstein asked Bergfinn if he wanted to ride with him up to Valfell. The Borgarfjord people held their local assembly there in those days, and Thorstein had been told that the walls of his booth[2] had fallen in. The Norwegian replied that he indeed would like to go . . . and when they arrived at the place where the booths were they all set to work digging out the walls.
It was a hot, sunny day, and when they had finished digging out the walls, Thorstein and the Norwegian sat down inside the booth. Thorstein dozed off, but his sleep was rather fitful. The Norwegian was sitting beside him and let him finish his dream undisturbed. When Thorstein woke up, he was in considerable distress. The Norwegian asked him what he had been dreaming, since he slept so badly. "Dreams don't mean anything," Thorsteinn answered.
Now when they were riding home during the evening, the Norwegian again asked what Thorstein had been dreaming about.

2 A booth, in Icelandic *búð*, was a temporary dwelling used by those who attended the various assemblies. Structurally, they seem to have involved permanent walls, which were covered by a tent-like roof, probably made of cloth (Viðar Hreinsson 1997, V, 406).

"If I tell you the dream," Thorstein replied, "You must explain it as it really is." The Norwegian said that he would take that risk.
Then Thorstein said, "I seemed to be back home at Borg, standing outside the main doorway and I looked up at the buildings, and saw a fine, beautiful swan up on the roof-ridge. I thought that I owned her, and I was very pleased with her. Then I saw a huge eagle fly down from the mountains. He flew towards Borg and perched next to the swan and chattered to her happily. She seemed to be well pleased with that. Then I noticed that the eagle had black eyes and claws of iron; he looked like a gallant fellow.
Next, I saw another bird fly from the south. He flew here to Borg, settled on the house next to the swan, and tried to court her. This bird was also a huge eagle. Immediately, when the second bird arrived, the first eagle seemed to become rather ruffled, and they fought fiercely for a long time, and I saw that they were both bleeding. The fight ended with both of them falling off the roof-ridge, one on each side; they were both dead. The swan remained sitting there, grief-stricken and dejected.
"And then I saw another bird fly from the west. It was a hawk. It perched next to the swan and was gentle with her, and later they flew off in the same direction. Then I woke up. Now this dream is nothing much," he concluded, "and must be to do with the winds, which will meet in the sky, blowing from the directions that the birds appeared to be flying from."
"I don't think that's what it's about," said the Norwegian.
"Interpret the dream as seems most likely to you," Thorstein told him, "and let me hear that."
"These birds must be the fetches of important people," said the Norwegian. "Now, your wife is pregnant and will give birth to a lovely baby girl, and you will love her dearly. Noble men will come from the directions that the eagles in your dream seemed to fly from, and will ask for your daughter's hand. They will love her more strongly than is reasonable and will fight over her, and both of them will die because of it. And then a third man, coming from the direction from which the hawk flew, will ask for her hand, and she will marry him. Now I have interpreted your dream for you. I think things will turn out like that."
"Your explanation is wicked and unfriendly," Thorstein replied. "You can't possibly know how to explain dreams ("The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue" 1997, I, 306-07--without italics)]

The story deals with two men, Þorsteinn (Thorstein) and Bergfinnur (Bergfinn), who argue about the interpretation of a dream which Þorsteinn has dreamt. Þorsteinn claims that his dream forebodes the weather, disregarding the

idea that the birds also can be seen as fylgjur. In Icelandic, the term *mannafylgjur* is used: the fylgjur of men. Bergfinnur suggests, on the other hand, that the dream refers to an event related to the family of the dreamer. The disagreement can be seen as a neat rhetorical device used by the writer of the saga. It increases the tension in the story, and encourages the audience to speculate on who will prove to be right, in the end. Additionally, the difference in opinion might reflect the general theme of people having difficulties in facing fate, as the aforementioned example from "Vápnfirðinga saga" also demonstrates: Brodd-Helgi becomes angry because of his foster mother's explanation of her premonitory dream, which assumes that Brodd-Helgi's son Bjarni will seek vengeance for the death of his father, and not his son Lýtingr. Discussions between dream interpreters are found in several other Old Norse sources as well. Most of the time, two possibilities are put forward: a weather prediction or a more dramatic event in the life of the dreamer or of his relatives or acquaintances, such as an attack or death. Another example in which a weather condition and a more dramatic event are proposed as two possible interpretations of a dream derives from "Atlamál in grænlenzka", which was written approximately one hundred and fifty years earlier than "Gunnlaugs saga Ormstunga":

Kostbera kvað:

17.
"Björn hugða ek hér inn kominn,
bryti upp stokka,
hristi svá hramma,
at vér hrædd yrðim;
munn oss mörg hefði,
svá at vér mættim ekki;
þar var ok þrömmun
þeygi svá lítil."
Högni kvað:

18.
"Veðr mun þar vaxa,
verða ótt snemma,
hvítabjörn hugðir,
þar mun hregg austan."
("Atlamál in grænlenzku" in: Eddukvæði 1998, 332)

Kostbera said

17
[I thought I saw a bear come in here,
smash up the panelling,

swing with his paws
so that we were afraid;
many of us he held in his mouth
so that we were helpless;
his lumbering made
no small amount of noise

18.
That must mean a storm coming,
it'll soon be dawn
thinking of a white bear
that's blizzard from the east
("Atlamál in grænlenzku" in The Poetic Edda 1996, 220)]

This dream is dreamt by Kostbera, as was the dream about the eagle, discussed earlier in this chapter. Kostbera tells her husband of this dream about the bear. He claims that her dream refers to a blizzard from the east, but Kostbera is convinced that the dream indicates her husband's impending death, as the dream of the eagle was also thought to suggest.

That dreams are interpreted as weather predictions should not be seen as a coincidence, although this interpretation has been largely ignored by scholars studying dreams in Old Norse literature (see e.g., Kelchner 1935, Sluijter 1936, Turville-Petre 1966, Glendinning 1974 and Miller 1986). Wilhelm Henzen is an exception. He notes: "Gern half man sich mit der Ausflucht, der Traum beziehe sich auf schlechtes Wetter" (Henzen 1890, 21-22) ("Preferably, one helped oneself with the evasion that the dream referred to bad weather", m.t.). Henzen sees this alternative meaning as a construction of the saga composer (Henzen 1890, 23). I suggest that in early Iceland, animals appearing in dreams could be interpreted as fylgjur, as standing for weather conditions, or for more dramatic events. In this context, it is interesting to note that nowadays, dreams about animals are also often interpreted as indicating certain weather conditions. A friend once dreamt about a light-coloured horse with a few brown spots. The horse had broken one of its legs. He told this dream to some of our friends, an Icelandic couple. The man interpreted the dream as an indication of how the coming winter would be: snow with occasional periods of thaw. His wife focused more on the horse's broken leg, and saw this as an indication of coming personal problems or illness. Of course, that a similar discussion is to be found both in contemporary society and in Old Norse literature may be due to the latter being available to every Icelander, nowadays. Nevertheless, it is striking that weather conditions are never mentioned in contemporary society, when reference is made to Old Norse dream accounts, while people may mention the more dramatic interpretations which the dream accounts profess to predict.

In Old Norse literature, the dramatic explanation often prevails over that of weather conditions, and the narrative context of the dream accounts indicates

this. The message is clear: The persons to whom the dream refers cannot escape their fate. When we again look closely at the example from the aforementioned "Gunnlaugs saga Ormstunga", and consider the narrative context, it is possible to discover the author's hints, suggesting that the more dramatic interpretation of Bergfinnur should be seen as the right one, and not the blizzard. First, it is written that Bergfinnur was a wise man with a keen interest in dreams, while we receive no clues about Þorsteinn's experience and skills in interpreting dreams. Secondly, it is remarked that Þorsteinn did not sleep well. In Icelandic, the expression *lét illa í svefni* is used, which indicates that the dreamer sleeps fitfully. Thus, Þorsteinn has moved to other realms, and his dream is a premonition. Of course, as "Gunnlaugs saga Ormstunga" progresses, the more dramatic interpretation of Bergfinnur proves to be the right one: the birds were the fylgjur of men, and did not indicate weather conditions.

Fylgjur in modern and contemporary material

Georgia Kelchner (1935) and Maria Sluijter (1936) agree that *fylgja*, in its narrow meaning of being the inherent counterpart of humans in animal form, is not present to the same degree in the Icelandic sources from the nineteenth century as it was in Old Norse literature. Both scholars have found few examples in which animals accompany living persons, and state that only a limited number of new animals is introduced, such as the seal (Sluijter 1936, 47 and Kelchner 1935, 26). Dreaming about a seal is often thought to indicate that a person has drowned at sea at the moment the seal is envisioned by relatives or acquaintances. But because dying seals represent people who die by drowning, and I did not come across an example in which a living seal accompanied a living person, it does not seem accurate to conceive of seals as fylgjur of men. The seal is instead a metaphor, in these cases. Sluijter takes seals to be no more than holdovers from the older religion, and concludes that fylgjur no longer appear in the folk tales (Sluijter 1936, 47, cf. Kelchner 1935, 26).

My research illustrates that animals such as wolves, bears, and eagles represent living persons in only a few cases in the folk tales, mainly those collected in the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century. For example, in the folk tale "Skálabúar og biskupsfrúin" ("The Cottage's Inhabitants and the Bishop's Wife")[3] wolves[4] are mentioned as fylgjur: Because "biskup lætur illa í svefni" ("the bishop had a fitful sleep"), his wife asks him what he has dreamt. As I mentioned previously, the use of this construction indicates that the problems the dreamer encounters are bound to happen in waking life. The bishop tells his wife that he dreamt of twelve wolves approaching her parents' farm. They looked very aggressive, especially the leader of the pack. His wife says

3 The story was collected in the nineteenth century, and its oral origins are not dated.

4 The word vargar (pl.) is translated as here "wolves", but the word has three meanings: wolves, vixens, or vermin.

then: "Þetta eru fylgjur illra manna" ("these are the fylgjur of evil men") (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, IV, 376). The folk tale has also incorporated other features of the Icelandic sagas. It is clear that the Icelandic sagas have served here as a model, and that the wolves are hugr, rather than fylgjur. Because of his dream, the bishop is able to prevent the attack announced in the dream.

However, in contrast to what Kelchner and Sluijter note, I have come across several folk tales in which a fox (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og sagnir*, III, 1922-1925, 240), mice, or a ram are considered to be the fylgjur of men (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og sagnir*, III, 1922-1925, 241). Also, Turville-Petre writes about fylgjur in the folk tales: "We hear of fetches who have the form of mice, sheep, dog, foxes, cats of prey or carrion feeders" (Turville-Petre 1972, 37).

With regard to contemporary Icelandic society, only one Icelander told me that he frequently dreamt about a wolf. He interprets this animal image in a similar way to the interpretation found in Old Norse literature: a hostile person in his social environment. Old Norse literature has clearly been a source of inspiration for the dream narrator, who is "saga-conscious". He also mentioned dreaming of other animals that play a role in Old Norse dream accounts, namely bears and eagles. The dreamer did, however, interpret the eagle symbol in a different way than is possible to find in the sagas. He said to me: "Örn er örlög" ("eagle is fate") and explained that the eagle flies high above everything, and sees very well. He has the ability to see through barriers of time and space, and is not the representation of a powerful person as in the Old Norse literature, but the symbol of fate.

Figure 4. Örn er örlög (The eagle is fate), painting made by the dreamer

Thus, animals continue to represent living persons in contemporary society, but human and animal are no longer supposed to be of one and the same kind. Another change can be detected, namely in the selection of animals. Insects, small birds, rats, mice, and lice have, in present day Iceland, taken on the task of representing humans, instead of the strong mammals, such as wolves and bears. I will elaborate on this in the next paragraph, and present one example here. During my fieldwork in the summer of 2000, my employer told me of one of her dreams:

> I dreamt that a raft lay on the water in the swimming pool. There were also some rats in the water. All of a sudden, the water started to stream violently and foam formed on the surface. The rats tried to climb onto the raft, but two of them didn't succeed, and drowned. (m.t.)

The woman related this dream to a sad event that happened shortly thereafter. The weather became bad, with a lot of snow. A bus skidded off the road and crashed, and two people died.

Just as it was necessary to question the extent to which animals appearing in dream accounts in the Old Norse literature are to be considered fylgjur, it is even more relevant to ask this with regard to the contemporary material. That animals in dream accounts represent persons in waking life does not necessarily indicate that these animals are supposed to accompany these persons throughout their lives, nor that it is thought that there is an inherent link between person and animal. The rats in the above example, should be seen as having a metaphorical, and not a metonymical relationship to the passengers of the bus.

Although we may conclude that, with a few exceptions, fylgjur no longer appear in the form of animals in the modern and contemporary material, the concept of fylgja is still found in modern society. Since at least the late nineteenth century, fylgjur start to appear in a variety of forms, as demonstrated in the writings of a woman born at the beginning of the twentieth century, in response to questionnaire number sixty-one, *Draumar, fyrirburðir, spádómar* ("Dreams, phenomena, and prophecies"), of Iceland's National Museum:

> They [fylgjur] showed their presence in as many different forms as people differ from each other. At the same time, one fylgja could follow members of different generations, for example a female bear followed my grandmother from my mother's side, and Skupla [a female draugur5] followed my grandfather. She [Skupla] appeared in a very nice way--at [my grandfather's] organ, when he was on his way home, [and] she hid herself at his back, when he and his wife went by

5 A *draugur* is a deceased person who returns to the living.

horse to visit acquaintances--that is what those skyggnir6 saw. This gift has never been given to me. Now Skupla, bless her, is so polite and at ease that she finds knocking on the door of my friends sufficient . . . [Two acquaintances[7]] have often gone to the door approximately five minutes before I arrive. I have forgotten to ask them if she [Skupla] has learned to use the doorbell since they have moved to the South. I have been told that she also knocks for my sons.
A light, a candlelight, followed my father, and that is the only thing I have seen. Then we, the two eldest sisters, . . . one evening, we saw it [the light] simultaneously at the side of his slippers--he . . . arrived directly after [the light appeared]. It was our task to welcome him home that evening . . . (ÞÞ 07046 61, m.t.)

As this woman mentions, a fylgja manifests itself in as many different forms as the variety of people that they follow. It seems that the diversity of appearance of fylgjur increases in accordance with a stronger focus on the individual in modern society. This diversity may also be due in part to my comparison of materials of different kinds. My assumption is that fylgjur and dreams, which function as rhetorical devices in Old Norse literature, appear there in a more standardised form than they do in the later material I collected. Other important elements in the story of this woman are that a fylgja can be transferred from parent to child, and that the female draugur, Skupla, simultaneously acts as a fylgja for the mother and her two sons. The idea of fylgjur following several generations is also a common theme of the folk tales, but in those instances the fylgjur often cause harm to the family they follow. When these *fylgjudraugar* appear in the folk tales in female form, they are called *skotta*, meaning "peaked", because of their headdress. They wear the traditional tall coif, but with the peak turned backwards like a dangling tail (Simpson 1972, 148). These fylgjudraugar also exist in male form, called *Móri*. The name derives also from their outward appearance. They wear dark, unbleached woollen clothes, which

6 People who were referred to as skyggn have often been described to me as: *þau sem sáu meira en aðrir* ("those who see more than others"). These people are thought to be able to perceive the hidden world while awake, and are therefore not dependent on their dreams to cross spatial and temporal boundaries. An older meaning of skyggn is the ability to see in the dark (*Íslensk orðabók* 1994). When speaking of the dead, people still may mention the extent to which they are afraid of the dark. It is sometimes thought that skyggn people are not afraid of the dark, because they know what is hidden in the darkness (Heijnen 2005). Skyggn is related to the ability to see hidden beings and dead people, but also describes the ability to see events which have happened long ago or are happening far away. This is called *fjarskyggn.* In a more daily context, the word is used with regard to weather conditions: *Veður bjart og skyggni gott* ("clear weather and a good view").

7 The contributor here uses the names of two persons, which I left out for reasons of privacy.

indicates poverty. *Mórar* (pl.) and *skottur* (pl.) are often the dead who are awakened through magic, with the intent of sending them to certain persons, and cause them harm (Simpson 1972, 143 and *IPÆ*, I, 1954-1961, 361-404). The dead who are awakened and sent to certain persons are also called *sendingar* ("those who are sent"), often giving the person to whom they are sent a feeling of fatigue. They are evil spirits.

In contemporary Iceland, as I observed during my fieldwork, fylgjur make their presence known in dreams, but it is more common to become aware of them through noises, smells, or a sudden feeling of drowsiness. They can also be perceived indirectly, when objects fall to the ground or machinery breaks down without obvious reason. Most frequently, people told me that it was the dead who announced the impending arrival of the persons whom they follow. People who I talked with and who are supposed to be *skyggn* ("who see more than others") often confirmed that the noises, smells, and feelings of drowsiness are caused by the dead. As the above quotation illustrates, skyggn people play an important role in shaping the images belonging to Icelandic folk beliefs. Their ability to see hidden spheres in waking life gives them authority over events or beings others only can hear, feel, smell, or see in dreams. During my stay in Hrunamannahreppur, I met a woman who considers herself skyggn. She told me that she sees fylgjur in waking life, and that she herself is followed by a so-called *hrekkjadraugur*, a deceased person whom she does not know, who breaks things or does harm:

> Woman: It is sometimes said that a draugur follows me, a hrekkjadraugur.
> Me: What kind of draugur is that?
> Woman: . . . When I am on my way to a certain place, something happens before I arrive. Something falls to the floor, something breaks down, and so on. I am wondering whether it [the draugur] can be one of those I saw when I went out [of my body], one of the three I saw.
> Me: So you don't know who it is?
> Woman: No, perhaps it is one of them, it just crossed my mind. It will perhaps be disclosed later.
> Me: And people tell you this? And then the word *hrekkjadraugur* is used?
> Woman: Yes.
> Me: Have you also noticed fylgjur following other people?
> Woman: Yes, I see it coming before [people arrive]. One evening, we were cutting up and preparing slaughtered lambs in the kitchen. Then we noticed someone walking about. I saw a man with a coat and a hat. I looked at him only briefly, and then I didn't think any more about it. Then, after ten minutes, a man came to the barn. We were

not expecting anyone. I described to him the man I had seen. Then it proved to be his [deceased] father. (m.t.)

In Reykjavík, people told me about fylgjur who announced the coming of guests by making noises, such as knocks on the door, some minutes before a person arrives. For example, a friend mentioned that he had on several occasions experienced the fylgja of his *frænka*[8] announcing her arrival in this way. Here too, fylgjur are supposed to be the dead, who are perceived either in dreams, or by skyggn people in waking life. The survey mentioned in the introduction, *Könnun á íslenskri þjóðtrú og trúarviðhorfum* (Arnaldsdóttir 2007), shows that sixteen percent of 652 respondents answered that they have perceived fylgjur either by hearing them (forty-two percent), seeing them (sixteen percent), or by perceiving the fylgjur indirectly, for example, by the outcome of their actions (twenty-one percent) or noticing their presence in another way (thirty-six percent). While more women than men stated that they have perceived fylgjur, as is the case for all experiences of other realms, men are in the majority when it comes to seeing and hearing fylgjur. Women, in contrast, perceive fylgjur indirectly or "in other ways". Of the people who have perceived fylgjur, sixty-five percent answered that other persons are also aware of these fylgjur. The survey asked people to distinguish between personal fylgjur and fylgjur who follow a certain *ætt* (a kin group). People still recognised fylgjur who can be transmitted from one generation to another (sixteen percent, in contrast to forty-three percent, for personal fylgjur), three percent having seen both, and thirty-eight percent having difficulties distinguishing between different types of *fylgjur* . When it comes to statements of belief, a majority of people, seventy-six percent of the respondents, believe that personal fylgjur exist (twelve percent are sure, nineteen percent find their existence likely, and forty-five percent consider it possible), while for ættarfylgjur, this is sixty-three percent (seven percent are sure, thirteen percent find it likely, and forty-three percent claim that it is possible). The survey from the 1970s does not distinguish between ættarfylgjur and individual fylgjur. Erlendur Haraldsson finds that seventy-two percent of the respondents believe that fylgjur exist (Haraldsson 1978, 27). Presuming that there is an overlap between the two groups who believe that ættarfylgjur and personal fylgjur exist, it seems that the belief in fylgjur has not decreased over the past forty years.

Changes in the conceptualisation of fylgja

The metonymical link, which was supposed to exist between humans and animals in the Old Norse sources, has disappeared in modern and contemporary Iceland. Instead, a metonymical link is found between the living and the dead. This indicates a change in the Icelandic conception of the self. Humans and

8 A frænka is a female collateral relative.

animals are no longer supposed to be of the same kind, but the living and the dead are. However, it is necessary to proceed cautiously, when undertaking an analogous comparison. Even though fylgjur appear in both periods, the question should be posed as to whether the fylgjur found in Old Norse literature can be compared with those beings also called fylgjur, who we meet in the modern and contemporary material. In the Old Norse literature, the concept of fylgja covers two different meanings. It is used to denote the animal fylgjur, discussed here, but also the so-called woman fylgjur,[9] a kind of protective spirit of a person or group of relatives (*ætt*), who appears in female form (Mundal 1974, 84). In the folk tale collection by Sigfús Sigfússon, it is written that these fylgjur often appear in the form of women, because parents and midwives preferred to bury the afterbirth under the doorstep, or another place where the mother often passed (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og sagnir*, III, 1922-1925, 235, see also chapter 5). There is a clear difference between animal fylgjur and woman fylgjur. While the former have no ability to influence the life of the person they accompany, woman fylgjur, in contrast, have. Woman fylgjur and the persons they accompany are not each other's counterparts. A woman fylgja is an independent entity, and can choose to either help or to turn away from a person. In the latter case, the person will lose his or her luck (ibid., 95-96). Thus, woman fylgjur relate to the concept of *hamingja* (inborn force or luck) which, in its turn, is etymologically (and ethnologically) linked to the previously mentioned concept of *hamr* (another word for fylgja). I have pointed out how *ham* and *fylgja*, meaning "skin" or "afterbirth", are associated with the destiny of the child (cf. Turville-Petre 1972, 56). Turville-Petre states:

> Hamingja is generally used in abstract senses of 'inborn force', 'luck'. But when a man 'lends' his hamingja to another, as kings often do, the sense is more nearly concrete. More rarely, the hamingja is personified, and the word is applied to a female fetch. (Turville-Petre 1964, 230)

The following example is found in "Viga-Glúms saga":

> Þat er sagt, at Glúm dreymdi eina nótt: hann þóttisk vera úti staddr á bæ sínum ok sjá út til fjarðarins. Hann þóttisk sjá konu eina ganga útan eptir heraðinu, ok stefndi þangat til Þverár; en hon var svá mikil, at axlarnar tóku út fjöllin tveggja vegna. En hann þóttisk ganga ór

9 The terms animal fylgja and woman fylgja derive from the Swedish terms used by Else Mundal: dyrefylgja and kvinnefylgja (1974, 11). Mundal's work, dealing with the fylgja motif in Old Norse literature, is the only work which solely addresses fylgjur. It should be emphasised that animal fylgja and woman fylgja do not appear in the sources, but are analytical terms, based on their characteristic differences in appearance. As Mundal writes, it is important to analytically distinguish between the two categories.

garði á mót henni ok bauð henni til sín; ok síðan vaknaði hann. Öllum þótti undarligt, en hann segir svá: "Draumur er mikill ok merkiligr, en svá mun ek hann ráða, at Vigfúss, móðurfaðir minn, mun nú vera andaðr, ok myndi kona sjá hans hamingja vera, er fjöllum hæra gekk. Ok var hann um aðra menn fram um flesta hluti at virðingu, ok hans hamingja mun leita sér þangat staðfestu, sem ek em."
En um sumarit er skip kómu út, spurðisk andlát Vigfúss.
("Viga Glúms saga" in *ÍF*, IX, 1958, 30-31)

[It is said that Glum had a dream one night, in which he seemed to be standing out in front of his dwelling, looking towards the firth; and he thought he saw the form of a woman stalking up straight through the district from the sea towards Thverá. She was of such height and size that her shoulders touched the mountains on each side, and he seemed to go out of the homestead to meet her and asked her to come to his house; and then he woke up. This appeared very strange to everyone, but he said, "The dream is no doubt a very remarkable one and I interpret it thus -- My grandfather, Vigfuss, must be dead, and that woman who was taller than the mountains, must be his guardian spirit, for he too was far beyond other men in honour and in most things, and his spirit must have been looking for a place of rest where I am." But in the summer, when the ships arrived, the news of Vigfuss death became known (Viga Glum's Saga 1866, 35-36).]

Thus, in "Viga-Glúms saga", the word *hamingja* is used in a similar way to *fylgja* or *hamr*. Glúm assumes that the enormous woman whom he met and invited in his dream is the hamingja (fylgja) of his maternal grandfather, Vigfúss, who lived in Norway. Because his hamingja appears in Iceland to join his grandfather's descendants, Glúm knows that his grandfather has died. The fact that the hamingja moves to Iceland instead of dying herself, when the person she follows dies, also indicates that we are dealing here with a different kind of fylgja than the animal fylgjur. The hamingja of "Viga-Glúms saga", as guardian spirit, seems to be transmitted to the next generation.

We have previously seen that fylgjur can also be considered responsible for negative events, such as the hrekkjadraugur in the previously mentioned example from present day Iceland. In modern Iceland, narratives about fylgjur are, in these cases, sometimes used to explain feelings of sympathy or dislike for particular persons. These feelings are thought to have an external origin, caused by the presence of the dead, and show that social relationships between the living are linked to relationships between the living and the dead. An example is the following conversation between the late Icelandic ethnologist Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson, and an Icelandic woman:

> Hallfreður: Did people sometimes perceive fylgjur over there?
> Woman: Yes, I think so, that there was talked about that, or that a particular smell was noticed when persons arrived, that happened. And I have experienced this once, although I cannot describe it. But it cannot be doubted that one feels differently near people. (SÁM 89/2010 and 89/2011, m.t.)

The dead who act as fylgjur in modern and contemporary society have independent wills and identities, and can influence a person and his or her surroundings, in both positive and negative ways. It is important to point out that the word *hamingja* is still used in present day Iceland, but solely in the sense of "luck" or "happiness". In contrast, the behaviour of the dead who act as fylgjur in contemporary Iceland is similar to the future behaviour of the living person they follow, whenever they announce the impending arrival of this person.

There is one last aspect to the concept of fylgja that I would like to note before I leave the subject, and turn to a discussion of animal images in modern and contemporary dream accounts. The supposed relationship between man and animal, or between man and other phenomena or objects, in combination with the idea that fylgjur can accompany different members of a lineage, reminds us of the highly debated concept of totemism. The similarities are interesting, but to explain the concept as a totemic phenomenon is not correct. Totemism is sometimes used to describe, in a general way, the relationship between an individual and an animal, object, or phenomenon (Keesing 1963, 279). I think, however, that it is necessary, in keeping with Levi-Strauss (1962, 28), to distinguish between such guardian spirits, and totemism, the central feature of which is the social bonding of a group. To quote Comaroff: "[Totemism] is . . . a function of processes in which autonomous groupings enter into relations of equivalence or complimentary interdependence and, in doing so, fashion their collective identities by contrast to one another" (Comaroff 1987, 307).

The modern and contemporary concept of fylgja is too diffuse to be designated as totemic. Fylgjur seem to tie people together in those cases in which they supposedly follow several generations of one family. Skupla followed a grandfather, his granddaughter, and her sons, but she stresses the continuity between people of different generations, and not between persons living at the same time. She did not create a social unit, vis-à-vis another unit with a different totemic emblem. An animal fylgja does not follow several persons simultaneously. When it dies, its "owner" dies, too. Neither is it possible to speak of totemism in the case of several enemies of one person, represented and bound together by the symbol of a wolf, for example, because this involves the concept of hugr, rather than of fylgja. The relationship between wolves and a group of men is of a temporal nature, in this instance. The wolves represent the attitude or the intention of the (group of) people they represent, towards another person; when this attitude changes, the appearance of the hugr changes.

A short discussion of totemism is nevertheless useful with regard to the concept of fylgja. It calls attention to a difference, not previously touched upon, between animal fylgjur as they appear in Old Norse dream accounts, and the concept of fylgja, mostly represented by the dead, as found in the modern and contemporary material. Raymond Firth speaks of totemism amongst the Tikopia: "It is the spirit in the animal or the spirit in the form of the animal who commands the respect and the 'totemic' interest of the Tikopian; the individual animal as such or the species as a whole has no particular ritual value. It is merely 'anything common'--*anea vare*" (Firth 1931, 304-05). According to Firth, totemic relations are thus triadic in character, positioned between two subjects and an object: a person, a spirit, and an animal. The animal serves as a kind of medium between the two first subjects. This is the case with animal fylgjur, as Else Mundal notes:

> Dyrefylgja, som hugen, kan ikkje oppfattast som eit verkeleg levande dyr. Ho er ein skuggeskapnad i dyreham som fullstendig tilhøyrer den immaterielle verda. Ho kan ikkje drepast eller sårast. Ho syner seg berre i draum, for synkse menneske og for feige. Dyrefylgja synest å halde til utanfor mennesket sin aksjonsradius. (Mundal 1974, 43)

> The motif of the animal fylgja, as of the hugr, cannot be seen as a real, living animal. It is a shadow in animal form, which completely belongs to the immaterial world. It cannot be killed or harmed[10]. It shows itself in dreams, to skyggn people, and to those who are *feigir*[11]. The animal fylgja seems to belong outside the field of human action. (m.t. and added endnote)

Mundal's statement acquires depth, when contextualised within Bergson's theoretical argument, related to his discussion of the "animal as genre". Bergson writes in his book, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (The Two Sources of Morality and Religion)

> En même temps que la nature de l'animal semble se concentrer en une qualité unique, on dirait que son individualité se dissout dans un genre. Reconnaître un homme consiste à le distinguer des autres hommes : mais reconnaître un animal est ordinairement se render compte de l'espèce à laquelle il appartient : tel est notre intérêt dans l'un et dans l'autre cas; il en résulte que notre perception saisit les traits individuals dans le premier, tandis qu'elle les laisse presque toujours échapper dans le second. Un animal a donc beau être du concret

10 This is somewhat misleading. As I pointed out in this chapter, fylgjur can die, and be killed by other fylgjur.

11 A person who is *feigur* (nom. sing.) is doomed to die.

et de l'individuel, il apparaît essentiellement comme une qualité, essentiellement aussi comme un genre. De ces deux apparences, la première comme nous venons de le voir, explique en grande partie le culte des animaux. La seconde ferait comprendre dans une certaine mesure, croyons- nous, cette chose singulière qu'est le totémisme . . . Qu'un clan soit dit être tel ou tel animal, il n'y a rien à tirer de là ; mais que deux clans compris dans une même tribu doivent necessairement être deux animaux différentes, c'est beaucoup plus instructif. Supposons, en effet, qu'on veuille marquer que ces deux clans constituent deux espèces, au sens biologique du mot: comment s'y prendra-t-on, là où le language ne s'est pas encore imprégné de science et de philosophie? Les traits individuals d'un animal ne frappant pas l'attention, l'animal est perçu, disions-nous, comme un genre. Pour exprimer que deux clans constituent deux espèces différentes, on donnera alors à l'un des deux le nom d'un animal, à l'autre celui d'une autre. Chacun de ces noms, pris isolément, n'était qu'une appellation : ensemble, ils equivalent à une affirmation. (Bergson 1976, 192)

[At the same time, we say that the nature of an animal seems to be concentrated on a single quality, its individuality dissolves into a genus. Recognizing a human means distinguishing him or her from other humans, while identifying an animal is usually a matter of referring to the species to which it belongs: this is then our interest in these cases; from here follows that our perception initially captures individual features, even though, in most cases, these features escape our perception immediately after. Thus, even though the animal has to be concrete and individual, it appears essentially as quality, as well as type. As we will see, the first appearance largely explains animal cults. The second helps us to understand, at least to some extent, the particular phenomenon that is called totemism... When a clan states to be a particular animal, we cannot draw any conclusion, but when two clans of one tribe necessarily need to be two different animals, it reveals much more. Suppose, in fact, that we wish to indicate that these two clans constitute two different species in the biological sense of the word: how will we come about this when the language has not yet been influenced by science and philosophy? The individual features of a certain animal will not escape our attention, the animal is perceived, we said, as a genus. To state that two clans are two different species, we give one clan the name of one animal and the other clan the name of another. Each of these names, taken in isolation, is only a name, but together, they are the equivalent of an assertion. (Bergson 1976, 192), m.t.]

It is in the work of Bergson that Levi-Strauss found inspiration for his theory on totemism. It is possible to analyse the animal fylgjur in the Old Norse dream accounts according to the lines of argumentation of these two scholars: Ox, stag, fox, bear, polar bear, swan, eagle, falcon, wolf, and serpent appear in *Íslendinga sögur* as animal fylgjur of *goðar* ("chieftains") (see overview of Mundal 1974, 30). We can assume that next to the metonymical link between animal fylgja and its human counterpart, the relationship between the animals represents the relationship between the various goðar. An indication of this is the previously presented example from "Vápnfirðinga saga", wherein variations in the appearance of fylgjur (oxen, in this case) reflect the ways in which the persons differ from each other in their appearance. This is not the case with the contemporary fylgjur, who are primarily seen as deceased persons, and are often known to those they follow. The latter relationship is of a dual nature. It unfolds between two consciously acting agents: a living person and a deceased one. The knocking on the door, the smell, or the breaking down of machinery is not a representation of a spirit, it is the direct experience of the presence of the dead. In other words, the changes which can be detected in the conceptualisation of fylgjur seem to indicate a change from a triadic to a dyadic relationship.

Animal images in modern and contemporary dream accounts

As I already mentioned, animals have not left the dream accounts found in modern and contemporary Iceland. Of the 554 dream symbols in my database, 123 can be classified as animals, including mammals, birds, insects, and fish. Animal symbols appear most often in contemporary dream accounts shared by Icelanders who have lived in, or live in the countryside. The meanings that the contributors of the National Museum of Iceland's survey relate to the animal images in dream accounts are quite similar to those symbols and meanings of which people told me during my fieldwork in Hrunamannahreppur. I have only included in my database those animal images and meanings that Icelanders explicitly stated as being related. I omitted those cases in which a dream account and a specific event in waking life were linked implicitly.

Taking the meanings attached to the animal images as a point of entry for my analysis, I arrive at a division of animal images into four main groups. The first group consists of various small animals, lice, mice, small birds, rats, and a fox with four cubs (*ýmis dýr*, *lýs*, *mýs*, *smáfuglar*, *rottur*, and *tófa með fjóra yrðlinga*) all of which are interpreted as representations of people (*fólk*) and, more specifically, of the coming of guests (*gestakoma*). In one case, mice are interpreted as people who gossip (*illt umtal*) and, in another, rats are viewed in a similar way. In the responses to the aforementioned questionnaire number sixty-one, one finds that dreaming about killing or getting rid of these small animals, also of lice, indicates the loss of livestock (*skepnumissir*). Eggs (*eggjar*) are often seen as representing childbirth.

Weather conditions are related to the appearance of livestock in dreams. Thus, livestock forms the second group. The information that these symbols are

thought to transfer is rather detailed, in comparison to the knowledge the other animal images provide. Dreaming about horses (*hestar*, *hross*), sheep (*sauðir*, *kindur*, *fjárbreiða*, or *fé*), and cattle (*nautgripir*, *kýr*, or *fé*) is thought to predict rain (*rigning*), sunshine (*sólskin*), snow (*snjó* or *snjókoma* or *hríðarveður*), a hard period (*harðindi*), cold (*kuldi*), storm with rain (*stórviðri*), a gloomy sky (*þungbúið loft*), a mild period (*þíðukafli*), snow- or ice-free land (*auðri jörð*), thaw (*hláka*), or a clear sky in summertime (*léttviðri að sumri* or *bjart veður*). Stockfish (*harðfiskur*), too, might be seen as an indication of a hard winter (*harðindi á veturinn*) or as the coming of snow (*snjó*), and fishing for trout (*silungar*) is sometimes interpreted as a dry (*þurrkur*) or mild period (*þýða*), or coming snow (*snjó*).

Salmon (*lax*) appears infrequently in dream accounts. I came across the symbol five times, and every time it was thought to refer to something positive: a good harvest (*góð uppskera*), wealth (*auðæfi*) and money (*penningar*), romantic attention from a boy (*eftirtekt pilts*), and successfully passing examinations (*standast próf*). Because of this, I have chosen to consider salmon as an independent category. Salmon are mostly seen as game in these dream accounts, and people may speak of "að veiða lax" ("to catch salmon"), or refer to the salmon they saw in their dream as being fat.

Animals that are seen as tokens that a person known to the dreamer, or the dreamers themselves, will become ill (*veikindi*) or will die (*feigð*, *dauðsfall*) are cream-coloured horses (*bleikir hestar*) or black birds (*svartir fuglar*), more specifically, ravens (*hrafnar*).

In the answers to questionnaire number sixty-one, a seal (*selur*) and a monster (*grimmt dýr*) are also mentioned as omens of death, but in Hrunamannahreppur, an agricultural area, I never heard of a dream about seals or a monster. Seals hold a rather special position in this group of animals, because seals and humans are considered to be one another's substitutes. The material shows that dreaming about killing people is seen as an indication of a successful seal hunt, dreaming about a dying seal is thought to predict the death of a human by drowning. This reciprocal relationship is not found with the other images.

Different principles of symbolic thought underlie the classification of animal images in these four groups. The animals are food for symbolic thought: first, on the basis of what people know, say, or believe about them (Sperber 1975, 108); secondly, on the basis of the prominent traits ascribed to them by empirical observation (Levi-Strauss 1962, 128); and, thirdly (which qualifies the first and second points), on the edibility and spatial classification of these animals in the Icelandic (waking) social universe. Edmund Leach has dealt with both edibility and spatial classification of animals in his article "Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse" of 1964. Leach investigates the connection between animal categories and verbal obscenities. The animal names that are used as verbal obscenities indicate that ritual attention is directed towards these animals. This is again related to their spatial classification and to ideas on their edibility. Using English society as frame of reference, Leach comes to the following five categories:

first, a category of "inedible" animals that are close to humans, such as pets; secondly, animals that are tame, but not very closely associated with humans, mostly edible but only if immature or castrated; thirdly, field animals or "game" animals that live under human protection, but are not tame (these animals are killed during certain periods of the year); fourthly, remote, wild, and inedible animals; and finally, a fifth category covering vermin in several categories (Leach 1964, 44-45).

Tapper argues that such categorisations are especially common in farming societies, because farmers often perceive themselves as being at the centre of a series of concentric circles of decreasing familiarity (Tapper 1994, 54). Both anthropological and historical studies have pointed out that the farmstead was, and to an extent still is, central to the Icelandic perception of the world (Gurevich 1969, Hastrup 1981, Gunnlaugsson 1988, Hálfdanarson 1995). Farms, which lay scattered throughout the countryside, were Iceland's main production unit until the nineteenth century. Rural life was supported both externally, through the Danish trade monopoly that limited opportunities to accumulate capital through fishing and trade, and internally, by a small Icelandic elite that tried to secure control of the rural labour force and, therewith, preserve their power (Hálfdanarson 1995, 769). Every Icelander was obligated to be connected to a farm. Landless people were not allowed to establish a household, and were forced to work as servants on another man's farm. Thus, farms were the places where social life was concentrated. Production, reproduction, and consumption all took place inside the farm's fences (Gunnlaugsson 1988, 33).

Within the context of the Icelandic social universe, the relation between the place where animals are supposed to live and the social centre, the farmstead, is significant to the meaning ascribed to animals as dream symbols. Figure 5 shows where the different animals selected as dream symbols are situated within the Icelandic spatial universe.

The small animals in the first group of dream images--insects, small birds, mice, rats, and a fox with four cubs--represent living persons. Typically, these animals live directly in and around human settlements, but, at the same time, they are largely outside of human control. They are nameless, and considered inedible. Foxes also have their habitat at the boundary between the "wild" and the "social", roaming, especially in wintertime, around human settlements, searching for food. It is probably their status as vermin that gives them a place alongside mice, lice, and rats. We should recall in this respect the term *vargar*, already encountered in examples from the Old Norse literature, which covers wolves, vixens, and vermin. In his work, *Íslenzkir þjóðhættir* ("Icelandic Folk Customs"), Icelandic ethnologist Jónas Jónasson frá Hrafnagili also discusses mice, rats, and foxes as belonging to one group, on the basis of their status as vermin, and of their being the only wild mammals living in Iceland (Jónasson frá Hrafnagili 1934, 184-91). I cannot, however, draw any conclusions regarding the fox as an animal image, because I have only one example in my material. I asked the Icelandic anthropologist Haraldur Ólafsson, who has studied the

Icelandic fox hunt, whether he has heard people saying that they have dreamt about foxes. He had not.

These small animals are supposed to represent people, above all, people in specific situations or roles, such as guests who will visit the dreamer (and the dreamer's household), or people who gossip about the dreamer. The fact that these animals live close to humans, but, at the same time, are outside of human control, reflects the often ambiguous position of guests and gossips: They are part of the same social space as the people they visit, or about whom they gossip, but are hard to control. Illuminating in this respect is the Icelandic expression *að skíra gestinn*, which was used when the inhabitants of a farmstead asked for the name of strangers who approached the farm. This expression means literally "to baptize the guest", but *skíra* means also to clean or to purify. Through the announcement of a name, the guest is purified, and becomes less dangerous. Mice, rats, lice, and foxes seem to have the traits appropriate to the representation of guests or gossiping people. For members of small Icelandic communities, who are tied together in complex and dense networks by daily life, these small animals are *bons à penser* (Levi-Strauss 1962, 128), on the basis of their observable traits, the traits ascribed to them, and their position with regard to the social space of the farmstead.

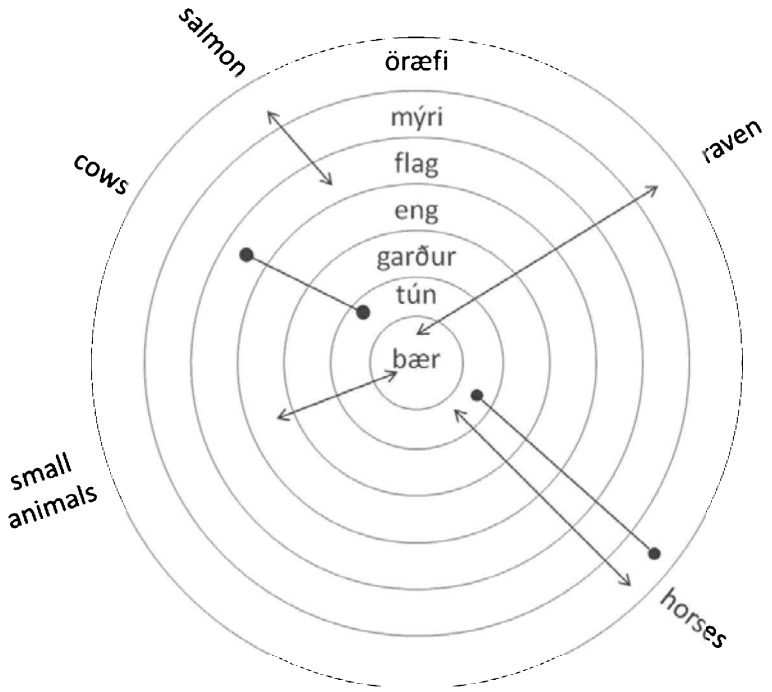

Figure 5. Model of spatial classification (presence and movement) of animals that are meaning-bearing elements in dream accounts

Öræfi	Uninhabitable or uncultivated land
Mýri	Swamp area, sometimes used to cut hay in the pre-mechanisation phase of agriculture
Flag	Field in transition, cultivated but not yet full-grown
Eng	Field with extensive agriculture
Tún	Field with intensive hay production, often fenced
Garður	Garden with vegetables or flowers
Bær	The farm

The transition from the large, and often strong animals that represented or were the counterparts of living humans, according to the dream accounts in Old Norse literature, to the small animals that represent living persons in the modern and contemporary material, can, in my opinion, be explained in two ways. Symbols have their origins in ordinary life (cf. Sperber 1975, 59), and this provides one clue as to why such a dramatic change in animal images has occurred, namely a change in the surrounding natural environment. The first settlers mostly came from Norway, where wolves, bears, and eagles were part of the natural surroundings, but in Iceland, only eagles are found. Polar bears arrived now and then on drift ice, and wolves did not exist. Several Old Norse sources, written in the twelfth century and onwards, are based on a previous oral tradition, but, once written down, the animal images became fixed points of reference. This is probably one reason that these animal images were significant in written dream accounts for several centuries after the settlement. I have not been able to establish exactly when large animals as representations of people came to be substituted by lice, mice, and rats. The relatively limited number of dream accounts in which animal images appear in the period between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries restricts the possibilities for a detailed analysis, based on analogies.

Changes to the environment should not be seen as the sole reason for this huge change in animal symbols. It can also be explained by referring to the context in which dreams were shared. Large and strong animals were *bons à penser* (Levi-Strauss 1962, 128) for the saga writers and the people for whom they wrote. The animal fylgjur, ox, stag, fox, bear, polar bear, swan, eagle, falcon, deer, wolf, boar, leopard, lion, a hawk with golden feathers, dragon, and serpent (see overview of Mundal 1974, 30), which appear in Old Norse literature, are the counterparts of goðar. Literature was, at that time, mainly an expression of people with powerful positions in society. William Ian Miller (1986) suggests that the narration of dreams played an important role in the Icelandic political arena. Early Icelandic society lacked a central power structure which could execute decisions at the *Alþing*, Iceland's legislative assembly, which arose around 930 AD. Gossip was an important tool in the struggle for power. By recounting a dream about a violent act, one was able to indirectly accuse a person, and to

create a web of suspicion (Miller 1986, 105). Such an accusation was only possible because the narration of dreams was supported by the assumption that dreaming was ascribed an external power. The responsibility could, in this way, be shifted from the accuser to the indisputable and intangible powers of another world. The offender in the dream accounts is often represented by an animal, and it was a matter of knowing or convincing others of which animal accompanied which person. Here, we have a clear illustration of Jędrei and Shaw's observation that sharing a dream can simultaneously be an active strategy for self-advancement, and a manifestation of the agency of spiritual entities (Jędrei and Shaw 1992, 13).

Paul Schach points out a more general link between power and the narration of dreams in early Iceland. He argues that Icelandic dreams of future renown clearly served a propagandistic function (Schach 1971, 52), as can be seen in dream accounts that are said to predict the birth of powerful kings. The future king is symbolised by something that is large or glowing. Hawks with golden feathers, or eagles with iron claws, do much better in this context than lice, mice, or rats, the animal symbols that represent living persons in the modern and contemporary accounts. The large and powerful-looking animals were not only good to think with, they were also good for communicating the power or status of a particular person and his descendants.

The shift in the selection of animals representing living persons in dream accounts runs parallel with two other changes: first, a transition from a metaphorical and metonymical relationship between human and animal, to a solely metaphorical relation; and secondly, a transformation of the social setting in which dreams are shared. The sharing of dreams (whether on paper or orally) has been the instrument of different social groups at different times. In contrast to the old literature, the dream accounts recorded in the modern and contemporary material are those of the average man, directed towards friends, relatives, or the local community.

Why, exactly, the killing of lice and mice is interpreted as the loss of livestock (*skepnumissir*) is more difficult to determine. I suggest that the spatial classification of these animals provides a clue. Lice and mice live in the space between humans and livestock (see fig. 6), and might represent the relationship between humans and livestock. Their killing would mean a separation of these two groups. It could also be seen as a sign of the ambiguity of social relations: Guests and gossiping members of the local community may be dangerous, but one cannot ignore them.

The second group of animal images consists of livestock. This group consists of horses, sheep, and cows. Livestock are animals subject to human control. Horses almost always receive a name; sheep and cows often do. At least, they receive a number by which their presence in social space is marked. The attention livestock receives in Icelandic dream accounts is extensive. Of the 123 animal symbols I entered in my database, 80 of them can be classified as livestock. In the Old Norse dream accounts, birds of prey and polar bears, among

others, are thought to indicate weather conditions, but in contemporary dream interpretation, livestock are linked to certain types of weather. The relationship that is supposed to exist between dreaming about livestock and weather conditions is not found in the folk tales, but is prevalent in the ethnological material collected in the twentieth and twenty-first century, including my own. A dream told to me by an Icelandic woman illustrates how a link is established between dreaming about sheep and the coming of snow in waking life:

> I dream often, especially of livestock, sheep, for snow coming. And one day, when it had been snowing a lot, approximately a fortnight, I dreamt that I saw here, . . . here on the road . . . down here that goes to Selfoss. I saw an incredibly big car. You see, at Limtré, they have a truck that is extremely long, but it seemed to me that this truck [in her dream] was even a half longer . . . I have never seen its like in reality . . . Such a long car . . . I could see inside the car from above, and it was completely filled with white livestock. Then I said [after she had told the dream to other people] now we are going to get a good deal of snow, and so it happened. (m.t.)

An explicit link is made by many Icelanders between dreaming about white sheep (*fé*, *sauðir*, *kindur*, *fjárbreiða*) and the coming of snow in waking life. Other animal categories that are supposed to foretell snow are horses (*hestar*), cattle (*nautgrípir*) or, more specifically, cows *(kýr*). However, dreaming about these animals can also be seen as a sign of coming rain, a dry period, or thaw. The meaning-bearing elements of these dream accounts are not only "livestock". Several other features contribute, to qualify the interpretation of a dream about livestock. One of these features is the movement and behaviour of the animals: Dreaming about running horses *(hestar á hlaupum)* is sometimes seen as an indication of an impending storm. Colour also refines the interpretation, as my discussion of dream images in the Old Norse literature indicated. When the animals that appear in the dream accounts are white or light coloured, there are two possible explanations: a period of snow or dryness. Again, a choice has to be made. Here, the time when the dream has been dreamt is important. To dream about a light-coloured horse right before high summer makes a prediction of snow unlikely. In this case, the conclusion is often drawn that the summer is going to be dry. It also works the other way around: When a dreamer dreams of white horses in a period during which snow is likely to fall, the dream will predict snow. With regard to rain prediction, the symbolism is slightly different. Animals, such as cows or sheep that are dark or spotted, can predict rainfall. Horses of a colour that Icelanders describe as "red" are interpreted in the same way.

In Iceland, the colours of horses and cows are based on a different system than that of other subjects or objects existing in the Icelandic world. Stated simply, it works in the following way: a horse that I would describe as "black" is

called a "brown" horse in the Icelandic language, and a horse I would describe as "brown", Icelanders use the term "earth red". A light brown horse to my eyes is, according to the Icelandic language, "pink" (*bleikur*). In practice, this colour system is even more complex, because different traits in the appearance of the horse define the colour.

It is interesting to note that, while the colour classification of horses and cows in daily discourse is complex, in the dream discourse a few colours are grouped together on the basis of their meaning: white and light (*hvít* and *ljóst*), on the one hand, and red, spotted, and dark (*rautt*, *mislit*, and *dökkt*), on the other. However, as I indicated, the colour "white" can refer both to snow and to a dry period, depending on the time when the dream is dreamt. The relationship established between meaning and the colour of livestock in Icelandic dream interpretation can be visualised as in figure 6:

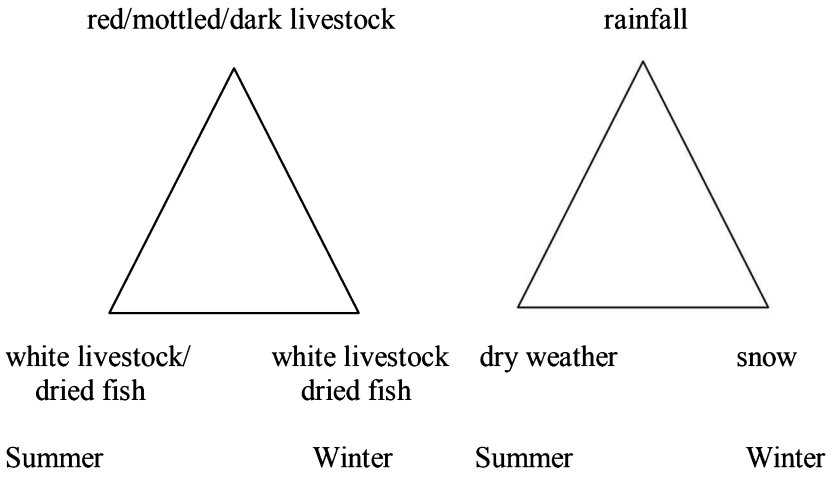

Figure 6. The meaning of colours, livestock and dried fish in Icelandic dream interpretation

This colour classification links livestock to other dream symbols that are supposed to represent weather conditions. A white object can also be seen as a sign of coming snow (see ÞÞ 12661 61 and ÞÞ 07082 61), and here the principle of resemblance is at work. Another symbol that predicts weather is hay. This dream symbol is typically communicated by older male farmers, but a forty-two-year-old also woman told me that she interprets dreaming about hay as being linked to weather conditions, as does her father. Most farmers claim that dreaming about a lot of hay refers to a difficult winter, which is expressed in several ways: a hard winter (*harðindi*), a bad time (*slæmri tíð*), a lot of snow and snow storms (*snjóbyl og mikinn snjó*), and to be without hay (*heyleysi*). A few people, like the above-mentioned woman, say that little hay stands for a hard winter. Hay connects the dream symbol of livestock to weather conditions

in a rather straightforward way: Bad weather means a limited hay supply, which endangers the survival of livestock, and thus of humans.

In Iceland, sheep, cows, and horses are considered to be of the same kind, when they represent weather conditions. They all belong to the category of "livestock". But some animals belong to more than one category, depending on the situation. Edmund Leach mentions pigeons and rabbits as examples of ambiguity, in his work on animal classification. Pigeons and rabbits are considered vermin when they eat crops, and should therefore be classified as inedible, but they may also be classified as game, and become edible (Leach 1964, 45). This hints at the reason that horses, as Icelandic dream symbols, are supposed to predict both death and weather conditions. On the one hand, they are animals of the wild, living untamed at the *mýri* or *öræfi*, and, as such, they predict death, just as do ravens and seals.[12] On the other hand, they are similar to sheep and cows, being under human control, tame and living quite close to the farmstead. The category of livestock is therefore more complicated than it may seem at first sight. Whereas cows in Icelandic dream accounts are always thought to represent weather conditions--mostly rain, because of their colour pattern--sheep and horses might appear as representing themselves. Icelandic sheep graze freely in the mountains during the summer. In the autumn, they are rounded up, but, should some sheep be lost, people may say that they use their dreams to find them again. The following example, from the response of a farmer to questionnaire number sixty-one, is typical:

> I have been around *smalamennskur* [people who round up sheep] in the mountains of Skaftafell, and then I have dreamt often about sheep that were difficult to find, especially [sheep] in trouble, and finding sheep by following my dreams worked out well. (ÞÞ 07031 61, m.t.)

---

12 The link between cream colour and the impending death of a person seems to be rather modern, but a relationship between a horse and death can be traced to older sources. For example, in a dream in "Gísla saga Súrssonar", a woman riding a grey horse (grá hestur) invites the main figure, Gísli to her house, where she says he will stay when he dies (Gísla saga Súrssonar 1943, 94); in "Baldurs draumr", Óðinn rode to Hell on the horse, Sleipnir ("Baldurs draumr" verses 2-4 in Eddukvæði 1954, II:465-66). In "Vatnsdæla saga", one of the figures, Þorkell Silfri, dreams that he thought he rode a red horse, and that he almost did not touch the ground. He explained the dream in a positive way: Red meant bright prospects, so matters would turn out to favour his honour, but his wife said that the horse was also a mare, and a mare was a fylgja of man, and red referred to blood. Thus, she pointed out that the dream referred to his impending death (Vatnsdæla saga 1939, 110-11). A few folk tales also deal with draugar who ride horses (Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri 1993 I, 404-06). In these examples, horses mainly play a role as mediators between different realms, such as between the world of the living and the world of the dead. This is confirmed by Oma (2004, 74-75).

During my fieldwork, I also met a farmer who told me that he often found lost sheep on the basis of his dreams, and such examples are numerous in both Icelandic folk tales and other records of dreams (e.g., see *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 25 and Hermann Jónasson 1912, 5-16).

The symbolic meanings attached to the appearance of horses in dream accounts corresponds to the fact that horses have an even more ambiguous position in the Icelandic spatial classification system than do sheep. They are found near the farm, but also at the mýri or öræfi (see figure 5). As dream symbols, they do not stand only for weather conditions, or illness and death. Horses are also seen as protecting spirits or spirits of guidance, and they may return in dreams after having died. Most often, the horse which appears in a dream has been owned by the dreamer, or the dreamer is in some other way very attached to the animal. The horse may help the dreamer by giving guidance, for example, by changing into someone to whom the dreamer should address him or herself in waking life; by being in the company of a dead person familiar to the dreamer, who explains to the dreamer what to do; or, by speaking in human speech, in Icelandic. A woman told me that a horse she owned in her youth appeared in her dreams after its death, to guide her in several affairs, such as the purchase of an apartment. In her dream, her horse stood near the apartments in which she was interested. She could read from his behaviour what kind of apartment he found most suitable, and to whom she should address herself, to finance her purchase. In this case, the horse appears in the dream account as himself.

The fact that dead horses are thought to be able to appear in the dreams of the living indicates that they are supposed to cross over from the realm of the dead to the world of the living. As I will demonstrate in chapter 5, these ideas are consonant with Icelandic conceptions of life after death, with regard to humans. For example, both humans and horses can complain, after having been buried, about their well-being. An example is a dream account of Stefán Jónsson, an inhabitant of Hrunamannahreppur, at the beginning of the twentieth century. His horse became ill one summer. Stefán hoped for some time that the horse would recover, but there was no hope. One day, his horse stood absolutely still before the window and gazed at him for a long time. Then, Stefán decided to shoot the horse, and buried it. One or two nights after this event, Stefán dreamt that the horse came to him and said--in human speech--that his feet were cold. Stefán thought, at first, that the dream had no meaning, but soon he understood that a dog had dug such a deep a hole at the burial site, that only very little soil covered the horse's feet (Jónsson frá Minna-Núpi 1955, 160). Here, horses are not considered as belonging to the category of livestock, nor to that of wild animals. They are associated with humans, on the basis what is known, said, and believed about them (Sperber 1975, 108). Horses are considered to be intelligent, and sometimes skyggn. Some people bury a horse that they have owned and which was special to them, in their garden, and decorate the grave with flowers.

In my experience, dream accounts that are thought to predict weather conditions are especially frequent among male farmers or owners of greenhouses in Hrunamannahreppur. These dream accounts are less controversial than those predicting, for example, illness, gossip, and death. Therefore, and because they serve to mystify and neutralize sources of knowledge and skills that a farmer needs to develop, they are a frequent topic of conversation in rural Iceland. "Weather dreams" are used as social strategy, in a similar way to the sharing of certain dream accounts among Icelandic fishermen. Gísli Pálsson and E. Paul Durrenberger have described how Icelandic fishermen--who are engaged, as are the farmers, in the capitalistic market system--claim that dreaming helps them locate fish. The recounting of dreams serves to explain differences in the sizes of the catches. Among both fishermen and farmers, dream accounts serve to hide individual differences in knowledge, skills, and access to technical equipment, and to increase social prestige (Pálsson and E. Paul Durrenberger 1982 and 1983).

The third group of animals consists of salmon. Salmon appeared only five times in my material, but in all cases it was considered to be a positive sign, especially when they were fat or large. Salmon appear in these examples as game, and as such are edible.

The fourth group of animals, composed of black birds, cream-coloured horses, and seals, is confusing at first sight, if we follow the theory of Edmund Leach, and consider their "edibility". Seals are eaten, while ravens are considered inedible. Horses were not eaten, but are nowadays. My older informants could remember that, when they were children, those who ate horse meat were looked down upon, as only the very poor did so.

Before Iceland's modernisation, horses were divided in two categories: *drátt-arhestar* (horses used for drawing carriages) and *reiðhestar* (riding horses). Horses which were not suitable for riding could be used for other purposes. With modernisation, horses were no longer used for traction, and those without potential as suitable riding horses are slaughtered; at the same time, people normally do not eat horses they have ridden. Some horses live outdoors, at the mýri or öræfi (see fig. 5), year-round, and may be untamed. Ravens are seen in the wild mainly during summertime. In wintertime, they move closer to human settlements, and it is often in this state that they are the subject of attention in Icelandic folk belief. A raven that sits (in waking life) on the roof of a farm can be seen as an indication of imminent illness or death of one of the inhabitants (for example, see *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, II, 529). As indicated before, this is because these animals traverse spatial categories that associate them with death. Seals have an ambiguous position, which is spatially confirmed by the fact that they belong to both land and sea (Pálsson 1990 and Einarsson 1990).

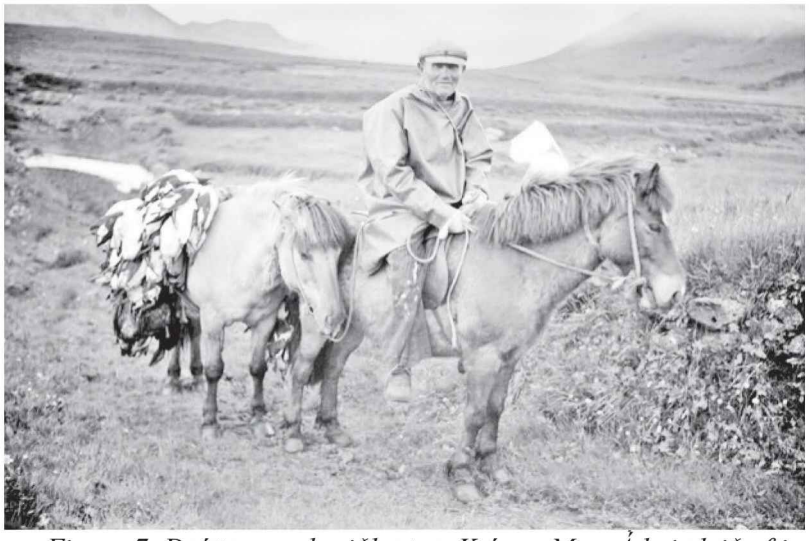

Figure 7. Dráttar- and reiðhestur. Krísuv. Mar. Á heimleið eftir fuglaveiði í Krísuvíkurbjargi (on the way home after bird hunt), 1941. Photo: Á. L. J. Reproduced with kind permission of the local archive in Selfoss.

The dream accounts I have discussed here are mostly sourced from people engaged in agricultural life. Dream accounts about white sheep indicating the coming of snow are rare in an urban setting. In Reykjavík, animals also appear in dream accounts. For example, I have heard cats mentioned, twice. Both times they were interpreted in a similar way to rats and mice, namely as a symbol for a person who cannot be trusted in the near environment of the dreamer. More commonly, however, foreign animals, such as snakes, spiders, or lions are mentioned in these accounts, and they do not have such fixed meanings as the animal images I have discussed above. Urban citizens in Iceland do not live together with livestock, and mice, rats, and lice are less visible. As Tapper (1994, 56) suggests, in an urban-industrial society, which offers little experience of what animals are "really" like, these become stylised or idealised humans, of which pets are a perfect example. On the other hand, in the Icelandic urban setting, the focus is on images of foreign wild animals, with the stress on "images". As Tapper notes: "The animals of the mind remain with us, while real animals have become marginalised" (Tapper 1994, 56).

Concluding remarks

My main aim in discussing animal images in this chapter has been to explore how the sharing and interpretation of dreams works in Iceland, and thereby provide a comparison between animal images as they appear in dream accounts found in the Old Norse literature from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, and animal images in modern and contemporary dream accounts. Through this comparison, I have sought to detect changes in the practice of Icelandic dream shar-

ing, and to lay bare the relationship between the practice of sharing dreams and cosmology.

In Iceland, the narration and interpretation of dreams builds on a set of symbols and images, in which meaning is (at least partly) shared. The sharing of dreams is firmly rooted in cosmological conceptualisations of the soul, personhood in general, and of "supernatural" beings such as fylgjur. This does not mean that Icelandic dream sharing has a static character. Among other things, its dynamics lie in the multiple meanings ascribed to the different dream images, and in the many possible ways the images can be combined. I described, for example, the significance of colours in the interpretation of animal images, as representing certain weather conditions. Another example comes from a woman's response to questionnaire number sixty-one: She considers the joint appearance in a dream of the symbols of "water" and a "cream-coloured horse" a bad sign. Her grandmother was of the opinion that when both symbols appear in one and the same dream, the death of a person in her social environment was near (ÞÞ 07130 61). Thus, images can either be interpreted in isolation, or in combination with one another other in a constant interplay with social events and the motivations of the persons involved. New meanings can be created through the right combination of "old" images and interpretations, intensified, weakened, or refined. As Armin Geertz suggests: "[Meaning] becomes emergent only in the hands of social actors" (Geertz 1992, 27).

This dynamic character of Icelandic dream sharing makes it easily applicable to constantly changing situations and personal motivations (cf. Vitebsky 2005, 289), but it also preserves Icelandic dream theory, presented here: If the interpretation of a dream does not correspond with the way events develop, it is not the dream that is considered to be false, rather, the specific interpretation of the dream is blamed, and often, an alternative event is sought. Thus, the narrated dream can be subject to several interpretations, and dream interpretation is not a matter of creating a meaning, but of finding the waking event that is intrinsic to the dream. The dream and waking events appear as part of the same reality, rather than just being metaphorically related. This indicates that dream sharing is supported by a cosmology, which presupposes that hidden temporal and spatial spheres and beings exist "out there in the world", and that these spheres can be observed through dreaming, and through a certain degree of involvement in these spheres. It also implies that the existence of this cosmology is more supportive of the tradition of dream sharing in Iceland than the need to explain and justify actions, or to address other problems or situations through the activity of sharing dreams. The cosmology is, in turn, generated, because dreams are shared and interpreted in everyday life.

The dynamic character of dream sharing is not only present in modern and contemporary life, but can also be read between the lines in the older sources. Even though the dream accounts are presented in the written sources in a standardised way, I have argued that they reflect a practice of dream narration in daily life. Both the way in which dream sharing functions, and the epistemology

of dream sharing as revealing hidden spatial and temporal parts of the world, have persisted over time.

Changes in the practice of dream sharing, presented here, have mainly occurred with regard to the selection of meaning-bearing elements, and to ontology and ethics. The Old Norse dream accounts illustrate the existence of an inherent link between animals and humans, expressed by the concept of fylgja. The concept of fylgja has not disappeared in modern and contemporary society, but means something different. While the early sources present the existence of animal fylgjur and woman fylgjur as two separate categories, in the modern acceptation of fylgja, the essential characteristics of animal and woman fylgja are combined.

With regard to form, a change can be detected over time, from an image of an animal (and a woman) to a variety of forms in the folk tales, such as light, animals, and the dead. Nowadays, fylgjur are primarily considered to be the dead. Animals do not disappear from the dream accounts, and continue to be metaphorically related to humans, but the idea that the relationship between humans and animals is one of contiguity has been lost. Also, whereas the kinds of animals that represented humans were once large and powerful, today they are small creatures such as lice, mice, and rats. This latter shift is linked to a change of environment, and in the social groups that utilize the revelatory power of dreaming as a narrative act.

Animal images are, in the modern and contemporary material, symbols that represent weather conditions, success, people (and their intentions), death, or illness. The four groups of animal images have acquired meaning according to the characteristic traits ascribed to them (cf. Sperber 1975, 108), and to the positions of these animals in waking life, with regard to the farmstead, for centuries the centre of the Icelandic social universe. An apparent example of this is that, as dream symbols, black birds (more specifically, ravens) and small birds belong to different groups, based on their position with regard to the farmstead, and to their salient features. Although, according to the Icelandic scientific point of view and their linguistic connotation, they both are part of the same taxonomical group: birds (*fuglar*).

Sheep and horses hold a special position within these four groups, because they can also stand for themselves in dreams. Sheep stand for themselves as visual objects of the dreamer who, while dreaming, sees what is normally hidden in waking life: for example, the place where a lost sheep can be found. Horses can act as themselves, as subjects ascribed a consciousness, and may, through dreaming, communicate with humans, as well as cross boundaries between the world of the living and the world of the dead.

These transitions that can be detected in the tradition of sharing dreams reflect reinterpretations in Icelandic cosmology. The disappearance of the metonymical link between animals and humans implies the rise of a division between nature and culture, and, thereby, the vanishing of the almost fluid conceptualisation of the person as owning a "soul" which is able to transcend the boundaries

of the body. Gry Wiker (2004, 129) suggests that this process is related to the influence of Christian ideas. As early as the Migration Period, Wiker detects a reorientation in the values of the upper classes in Scandinavia, initially directed towards nature (among others things, this is apparent in images on golden bracteates, which display half-human, half-animal figures), then to an orientation toward relations between humans and the godly domain (ibid., 124).

The nature/culture divide appears as an important distinction in Icelandic modern and contemporary dream lore. The idea that horses in modern and contemporary dream accounts can represent themselves as independent individuals should not be seen as a sign that a principle similar to that manifested in the concept of animal fylgja is at work. In present-day Iceland, horses and humans are not of a similar kind as animal fylgja and humans were. Horses can only act in dreams as themselves when associated with culture; they are humanised through the ascription of capacities such as intelligence and the gift of being skyggn.

It is necessary to consider these observations regarding Icelandic cosmology in the light of previous studies on the topic. The scholars Gurevich (1969) and Hastrup (1981) have pointed out that Icelandic cosmology is characterised by the coexistence of a horizontal and vertical structure. Gurevich argues that the horizontal structure is present in the division the Old Scandinavians made between *Miðgarðr* ("middle yard"), where the gods and humans lived, and *Útgarðr* ("outer yard"), inhabited by giants and other beings. In principle, these worlds were all on the same spatial level, and thus accessible: Humans lived in the same world as the animals, rocks, mountains, and (other) spiritual beings, and the landscape simultaneously conveyed geographical, mythological, religious, and social values (Gurevich 1969, 43-45). Thus, Gurevich suggests that in the cosmology of the Old Scandinavians, culture and nature were symbiotic. The vertical structure that Gurevich recognizes is most apparent in Old Norse mythology, because of the existence of *Ásgarðr*. Ásgarðr is a separate place which the gods built for themselves in heaven, situated next to *Valhöll*, the place were those who were slain in battle would live. Although vertically distanced in the horizontal spatial conception, Ásgarðr still belongs to the domain of Miðgarðr. Additionally, *Yggdrasill*, the world tree, and *Bifröst*, the rainbow which connects heaven and earth, are, for Gurevich, obvious signs of a cosmology in which the universe is seen as vertically structured. Gurevich ascribes this vertical structure to the introduction of Christianity in Iceland in the year 999 or 1000. Thus, in Gurevich's eyes, the coexistence of the horizontal and vertical structures reflects the coexistence of two conflicting religions: the pre-Christian and the Christian, with their essentially different spatial concepts of the cosmos (Gurevich 1969, 47).

The idea that Icelandic cosmology can be typified by a vertical and horizontal model returns in the work of Hastrup. With regard to the horizontal model, she argues that the deep structure of reality in Icelandic society is characterised by the binary opposition--"inside"/"outside"--which is rooted in the Icelandic

opposition between *innangarðs* (the space inside the fence, that is within or directly around the farmstead) and *utangarðs* (outside the fence) (Hastrup 1981, 74). According to Hastrup, humans were inviolable, inside the fence. Within or around the farmstead itself, they were in control of space, while outside, uncontrolled forces reigned (Hastrup 1990a, 276). Hastrup's theoretical outline differs in an important way from that of Gurevich, with regard to the influence of Christianity. Hastrup states that the vertical model already existed before Icelandic society was Christianised. The Christian vertical structure (the opposition between God and Man, and between Heaven, Earth, and Hell) adopted the pre-Christian one; Óðinn and Þór became replaced by God and Jesus. To quote Hastrup: ". . . it was a matter of filling new content into an old form" (ibid., 33). Hastrup links this spatial structure with a temporal arrangement. Change took place in the vertical model, while the horizontal model stressed stability and permanence of the world:

> In the horizontal model, the cosmological order remained constant; there was no change in the cosmic situation in the dimension of time . . . In contrast to this, the vertical model was explicitly concerned with the irreversibility of time . . . Connotations of irreversibility also sprang from the existence and conceptual prominence of the kingdoms of death. In the vertical model of cosmos, the emphasis was on the transitory nature of man, while in the horizontal model, the emphasis was on the permanence of the world. (Hastrup 1985, 150)

Interestingly, Hastrup concludes that this is the reason that beings that were spatially related in a horizontal way to living humans, such as giants, elves, and trolls, could survive in Icelandic cosmology, even in modern society, while the gods disappeared. Her theory is very tempting. However, considering the aforementioned changes in Icelandic dream images, with regard to form, function, and content, it becomes apparent that transformations in the vertical model of the Icelandic cosmology, owing to the introduction of Christianity and the modernisation of society, for example, influenced the conceptualisations of beings that were (spatially) horizontally related to humans, such as animal fylgjur.

I have indicated how animal fylgjur are related to the cultural assumption that a person consists of multiple selves, or even multiple souls, both enclosed in, and external to the body. Additionally, not only was a spatial distance supposed to exist between the souls, but also a temporal interval. Animal fylgjur imply a temporality wherein past, present, and future collapse, through the conceptualisation of the person as able to simultaneously act in different places and moments. In contrast, the events which unfold in the various narratives dealing with fylgjur, especially attacks and the subsequent (irreversible) death, point to a linear conception of time.

The concept of animal fylgja became dismantled when the relationship between humans and animals was no longer one of contiguity. This indicates that

the vertical and horizontal structures appear to be integrated to a much higher degree than Hastrup suggests, and that both structures incorporate change. This criticism is confirmed by the fact that Hastrup's theory does not explain why certain beings, such as trolls, disappeared from the daily narratives, while *huldufólk* and the dead still play a role in contemporary society[13], as I will illustrate in the next two chapters.

13 Margaret Clunies Ross (1994) has formulated a similar critique of Hastrup's analysis of space and time. She points out that *Útgarðr* ("outer yard") which Hastrup opposes to *Miðgarðr* ("middle yard") is only found in *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, in "Gylfaginning". Snorri, a Christian chieftain, based his work on "Völuspá", the first poem of the previously discussed *Eddukvæði*. Rather than tracing a spatial universe organised around a binary opposition in the Old Norse sources, Clunies Ross suggests a greater fluidity in the conceptualisation of mythic space. She finds convincing evidence for "a spatial conceptualisation of a series of territories belonging to different classes of beings arranged like a series of concentric half-circles, the perimeter of each circle being imagined as a kind of protective rampart, a *garðr*" (ibid., 51). Additionally, in her critique of Hastrup's analysis, Clunies Ross refers to Peter Schjødt, who has argued that in the vertical structure, too, there are notions of renewal, repetition, and return (Schjødt 1990, 54).

Chapter 4 Humans and Half-humans: *Huldufólk*

Introduction

In his work, *Dream and Existence*, the Swiss psychiatrist Ludwig Binswanger quotes the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (ca. 550-ca. 480 BC) on the experience of dreaming: "Those who are awake have one and the same world in common; in sleep each one returns to his own (world)[1]" (Binswanger 1986, 98). According to Michel Foucault, who wrote an introductory essay to Binswanger's *Dream and Existence*, Heraclitus does not mean by this phrase that the pathways of perception are closed to the dreamer. Foucault notes:

> What constitutes the *idios kosmos* of the dreamer is not the absence of perceptual contents but their elaboration into an isolated universe. The dream world is a world of its own, not in the sense of subjective experience defying the norms of objectivity, but in the sense that it is constituted in the original mode of a world which belongs to me, while at the same time exhibiting my solitude. (Foucault 1986, 51)

By using the word *idios*, Foucault emphasizes that the dream world is a "world of its own", exposing the dreamer's solitude, while *kosmos* indicates that the dream "already has the lineaments, the preconfigurations, of transcendence and worldhood" (cf. Williams 1986, 22).

Ullrich Ahrens arrives at a different description of the world experienced by dreamers, when he discusses an "indigenous" conceptualisation of the dreaming state:

> Die typisch indigene Konzeption des Traumes sei die eines Mittlers zwischen zwei parallelen Welten, die sich gegenseitig beeinflussen und durchkreuzen. Der Traumzustand, der als das Heraustreten der Seele aus ihrem Körper begriffen werde, schaffe die besondere Bedingung, unter der die natürliche--menschlich--übernatürliche Ordnung durchdrungen werden kann. (Ahrens 1996, 105)
>
> [The typical indigenous conception of the dream is that of a mediator between two parallel worlds, which mutually influence and intersect each other. The dreaming state, which is understood as the soul leaving the body, generates the special condition, whereby the natural--human--supernatural order can be penetrated. (m.t.)]

While the idios kosmos of Foucault is an isolated universe par excellence, the "indigenous" conception of the dreaming world can be typified as a merging

1 Quotation without the Greek original, and without Binswanger's notes.

of the human (natural) and "supernatural" worlds. Rane Willerslev (2004, 2007) mentions a similar difference, when he compares the Freudian view of dreaming with that of the Siberian Yukaghir. Willerslev argues that the premise from which Freud starts is that the mind is distinct from the world. Dreams, therefore, reflect only a person's inner state. The Yukaghir, in contrast, start from the assumption that the mind always subsists in the very engagement of the person in the world, quite independently of whether the person is asleep or awake. They consider the world of dreaming and that of waking life as two sides of the same reality, which together constitute one world (Willerslev 2004, 410). The difference between these two perspectives on dreaming, which--I stress again--should not be seen as a difference between a Western and non-Western perspective, is of an ontological nature. When it comes to epistemology, Willerslev argues--as does Foucault, in the quotation above--that the pathways of perception are not closed to the dreamer. He finds support for this in recent cognitive studies. These studies demonstrate that dreaming is not limited to REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep, and that dreamers employ the same systems of mental representation and processing as do people who are awake (Cavallero and Foulkes 1993, 133). Willerslev considers this to be evidence that humans never find themselves in an "empty reality", lacking any social engagement. He writes: "... whether awake or asleep, the person's encounters are always those of being-in-a-world" (Willerslev 2004, 412). In the afterword to his volume, *Dreaming, Religion and Society in Africa*, Roy Willis, too, draws the conclusion that the dreaming and the waking worlds are two complementary manifestations of a unitary, inter-subjective process (Willis 1992, 178). The acknowledgment that the dreaming mind has the capacities of perception, mental representation, and processing, links the study of dreaming to a theory of knowledge. Although the fundamentals of argumentation are different, a few recent anthropological studies on dreaming thus continue along the course that Binswanger set in 1930, by posing the problem of dreaming in epistemological terms.

The focus on the affinities between waking and dreaming experiences, which we encounter in an extreme form in the work of Willerslev, helps one to deconstruct the Freudian view on dreaming, which still prevails within the general anthropological discourse. It motivates us to take seriously the assumption, found throughout the world, that dreaming generates knowledge about the world, external to the dreamer. At the same time, such a focus shifts our attention away from the problem of shared experience. Even though our mental capacities function in similar ways while we are dreaming and while we are awake, dreamers do not simultaneously perceive the dream world. This is as much a problem according to the Icelandic dream theory discussed here, as for the Freudian theory of dreaming. For many Icelanders, hidden spheres have an objective appearance, in the sense that they are constituted and behave according to generally known rules, but the spheres are revealed differently, and at different times to each dreamer. For the dreaming mind, only parts of the hidden spheres or beings are presented or revealed, while the waking mind can actively address its atten-

tion, and that of others, to certain objects, subjects, and phenomena in the world. We are dealing here with two problems: the problem of subjective experience, which is a problem of degree, and not the outcome of an essential difference between the waking and dreaming state; and the problem that dreaming is "a stipulation, in this-world-reality, of (an)other reality associated with sleep" (Riches 1995, 103). The perceptive and cognitive capacities of the dreaming and the waking minds might be similar, but Icelandic dream narrators and anthropologists take "this-world-reality" as their point of entry.

If we translate, in anthropological terms, the arguments of Foucault and Binswanger, who maintain that the dream is a mode of experience and of world presentation, the problem of recounting a dream is not just one of reconstruction. The challenge faced by the Icelandic dream narrator also lies in the inclusion of the public in the power of the dream experience itself. Crapanzano, inspired by Foucault and Binswanger, draws our attention to the way the affected quality of the dream image is conveyed to the dreamer's audience. He notes: "Like any gift, its reception always produces an emotional response in the recipient (the interlocutor) which . . . produces a counter response in the gift-giver--the dream narrator" (Crapanzano 2001, 239).

This chapter seeks to present how Icelanders extend the influence of encounters during dreaming with invisible (to the waking eye) beings, called *huldufólk* or *álfar*, into waking life. This question is especially significant in Icelandic society, in which dreams play a role in motivating and legitimizing social action. An analysis of huldufólk accounts can initiate this discussion, which will be further pursued in the following chapters, because huldufólk and humans are thought to share the same geographical space, but not the same realm. In accounts of meetings with huldufólk or álfar, a concern with shared experience is expressed in several ways. First, as I indicated in preceding chapters, people who are awake can read from the behaviour of the dreamer whether he or she is engaged in hidden spheres. People may, for example, sleep much longer than they commonly do, be difficult to waken, or show much unrest in their sleep. Secondly, the relationship between humans and huldufólk is one of exchange. I define exchange as all activity in the course of which something (material, immaterial, or organic) is seen to circulate. This definition derives from the comparative study, *Of Relations and the Dead* (Barraud et al. 1994). According to the folk tales about huldufólk, material objects, food, humans, huldufólk, services, and advice have the capacity to cross over from the dreaming to the waking world, from hidden to revealed spheres. The circulation of these "objects" of exchange implies, in most cases, their transformation. For example, objects belonging to the invisible world become visible objects in the human world, and humans going over to the world of the huldufólk become huldufólk. But, as I will argue, while objects of exchange can become permanently transformed, the subjects who perform the exchange need to retain their identity. These practices of exchange confirm the existence of other realms, and enable the penetration of elements of hidden realms into everyday human life.

A second aim of this chapter is to discuss transitions in what is at stake in the relationships between huldufólk and humans. For this purpose, I shall consider two different periods: the "folk tale period", which covers the nineteenth century, when folk tales were collected and written down, as well as preceding centuries, since the tales are rooted in a long-standing oral tradition,[2] and contemporary Iceland, with which I engaged during my fieldwork. For the first period, I use the folk tales collected by Jón Árnason. For the second period, my analysis is based on the material that I collected in Hrunamannahreppur and in Reykjavík. I note that these two periods diverge with regard to the nature of relationships between humans and huldufólk, the objects that are exchanged between them, and the themes that are prevalent in the accounts of encounters between the two groups.

There is one last methodological remark that I intend to make, before I go on to a discussion of these two periods. Because the dreaming sphere and the waking sphere are two sides of the same reality, it should be no surprise that people can encounter huldufólk both while dreaming and while awake, in those occasions that the huldufólk wish to show themselves, or when people are *skyggn* (see more than others). The Icelandic ethnologist, Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, has investigated whether a difference can be detected between the folk tales that discuss waking encounters with huldufólk, and those that describe encounters with huldufólk while dreaming. He states that he has not discovered a clear difference. The messages delivered during sleep are considered to be as realistic as those delivered while the recipients are awake (Aðalsteinsson 1993, 130). I may add that, in contemporary Icelandic society, the waking experiences of skyggn people have greater authority than people's encounters with huldufólk while dreaming. However, this has more to do with the higher status of skyggn people, in comparison to those "who cannot see", when it comes to contact with hidden beings, than with a hierarchical difference between the waking and the dreaming state. I will therefore not only base my analysis on dream accounts, but also on accounts that deal with waking encounters with the huldufólk.

The "folk tale period": huldufólk and humans, others and the self

The oldest myth that deals with the origin of the huldufólk, at that time called álfar, is to be found in the poem *Fjandafæla* ("To Scare off Fiends"), which Jón lærði Guðmundsson (1574 - ca. 1658) wrote in 1611. In strophe 56, he describes the álfar as the issue of Adam's sperm. Why he does so is clarified in his *Samantektir um skilning á Eddu* ("Compilations on Understanding the Edda") of 1641. Jón states that Adam's sperm fell to the ground because Eve

2 According to the database, *Sagnagrunnur*, of the Department of Ethnology of the University of Iceland, also mentioned in the introduction, several of the folk tales collected in the nineteenth century can be dated to the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

was sent away after the fall of Abel, a period during which many were expelled (Pétursson, II, 1998, 36-37; Helgi Hallgrímsson 1996, 65; also see *Kennimark Kölska* (*Caracter Bestiae*) 1976, 103-07 and *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, III, 3).

A second myth, "Tilorðning Huldufólks" ("The Becoming of the Huldufólk"), which is found in the collection of folk tales of Jón Árnason, and is well-known today, goes as follows:

> Það var eitt sinn að guð kallaði til Evu aldamóður og sagði henni á ákveðnum degi og tíma að sýna sér öll born sín á tilteknum stað og láta þau vera kembd og þvegin og svo vel búin sem föng væri á. Eva gerði sem henni var boðið, en af því börnin voru mörg nennti hún ekki að hafa fyrir að búa þau öll svo vel sem skyldi. Tók hún þá nokkur frá af hvoru kyni er henni þóktu óselegust og fal þau í helli einum og bjó svo um dyrnar að þau kæmist ekki á braut þaðan, en öll hin lét hún koma fram fyri auglit drottins á tilteknum stað og tíma. En er guð kom að sjá yfir born hennar þá spyr hann Evu hvert hún hafi ekki fleiri born, en hún neitti því. Þá mælti guð til hennar: "Það sem þú nú hefur viljað hylja og dylja fyri guði þínum, það veri héðan í frá hulið og dulid fyri þér og bónda þínum og öllum niðum ykkar nema þeim einum er ég vil það veita, og engjar nytjar né skemmtun skuluð þið af þeim hafa héðan af. (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, III, 4)
>
> [Once upon a time, God called Eve, the mother of humanity, and told her to present her children to him at a specific time and place. They should be properly combed and washed, and be as well prepared as possible. Eve began to do what she was asked, but since there were so many children, she did not feel like them prepared as she should have done. She took some of both sexes, whom she found the least presentable, hid them in a cave, and locked the doors in such a way that they could not easily come out. She presented the others to the eye of the Lord at the requested time and place. And when God arrived and looked at the children, he asked Eve whether she did not have any more children. This she denied. Then God spoke to her: "What you want to keep secret and hidden from your God, will be from now on kept secret and hidden from you and your husband and all your descendants, except those few, whom I will take as witnesses. You will have neither benefit nor harm from them, from now on. (m.t.)]

A third myth tells of a man who had lost his way, and came to a farm he did not know. At the farm, he was welcomed by a woman and two young girls. The man received something to eat and to drink, and asked whether he might be allowed to sleep with one of the girls. His wish was accommodated. When he

turned over to touch the girl, he did not feel anything between his hands, although he could see her lying next to him. He asked her how this was possible. The girl answered that when the devil revolted against heaven, he and all who were with him were chased away to the outermost darkness. Those who turned, and looked in his direction were also expelled from heaven. And those who were not with him or against him, and who did not belong to either party, were expelled to Earth, to live in hills, mountains, and stones. They are called álfar or *huldumenn* ("hidden men") (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, III, 7). A fourth myth relates that huldufólk are those who had asked God forgiveness for their sins, therefore God saved them from the flood of Noah, by opening caves in the earth in which they could hide (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, III, 3).

Several other myths exist about the huldufólk, and they offer various accounts of how the huldufólk came into being. Nevertheless, consistent features can be detected, which reappear in other folk tales about huldufólk. All the tales confirm the close relation between huldufólk and humans: They are considered to share a common origin, or at least a common father, being seen as the descendants of Adam, or of both Adam and Eve. The main difference between huldufólk and humans is that humans, in waking life, are not able to see huldufólk, while huldufólk can see both the human and their own hidden world. The myths imply a parallel between the hidden nature of the huldufólk and the fact that they do not conform completely to the image of being human. In the first myth, huldufólk are described as having arisen from Adam's sperm and, probably, the earth on which it dropped. Having only a father and not a mother, they can be literally considered "half-human". Another aspect that points to the incompleteness of the huldufólk is that they came into being in a cave. Considering the fact that, at the time this folk story was shaped, the farmstead formed the centre of the Icelandic social universe (Gurevich 1969, Hastrup 1981, Gunnlaugsson 1988 and Hálfdanarson 1995), and it was at the farmstead that human children were born, an opposition between "wild" and "social" is implicitly present.

In the second myth discussed here, the huldufólk are seen as the least presentable children of Adam and Eve. Here too, it is stressed that they do not conform to the complete image of being human. The last sentence of my translation of the myth is, in this context, illustrative. God says to Eve: "You will have neither benefit nor harm from them from now on." God forever hides the children that Eve has hidden from him, and the social characteristics of humans, of being both useful and harmful to their fellow beings, are taken from them.

Thus, the invisibility of the huldufólk seems to neutralize them, and reduces them, from a human point of view, to non-social beings. The link between their hidden nature and their neutral position returns in the third myth that I mentioned. Here, the huldufólk are described as those who did not choose between the devil and heaven. Therefore, they became hidden. The fourth myth, in which the huldufólk are seen as humans who asked forgiveness for their sins and were,

for that reason, saved from the Flood by God, also makes a clear distinction between humans and huldufólk. The huldufólk are positioned in contrast to Noah and his family, who survived the punishment of God, on the one hand, and, on the other, those humans who perished in the flood.

Differences and similarities between huldufólk and humans are also expressed in the spatial arrangement of the world of huldufólk, in relation to that of humans. The huldufólk live near to humans, in natural features located in cultivated areas. As Kirsten Hastrup notes, on the basis of her fieldwork in the Icelandic countryside, at the beginning of the 1980s: "They [the huldufólk] lived in the knolls and rocks in the immediate neighbourhood of the farmsteads, that is, in those small points where the wild broke through the cultivated surface" (Hastrup 1990b, 264). Dreaming enables persons to look through the surfaces of the natural features, and to discover that the knolls and the rocks are actually the buildings of the huldufólk. This function ascribed to the activity of dreaming resembles that which Tim Ingold has described for the Ojibwa, for whom dreaming is a means "to penetrate beneath the surface of the world, to render it transparent, so that one can see into it with a clarity and vision that is not possible in ordinary life" (Ingold 2000, 101). In the collection of folk tales by Jón Árnason, we find examples of the places where huldufólk are thought to live: a house situated in a big stone near a farm ("Sýslumannskonan á Burstarfelli" in *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 15-16); a big rock at a levelled *mýri* (a swampy area that, before the mechanisation of agriculture, was sometimes used to cut hay), which could be seen while standing at the *tún* (field with extensive hay production, often fenced), situated close to a farm with intensive hay production) (Borghildur álfkona in *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 9-10); between a farm and a stream in which a servant girl used to wash clothes (Álfkona og áfaaskurinn in *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 11); in a hill near a tún (Yfirsetukonan in *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 17-18); and in a rock, standing isolated in a *flói* (flat and levelled land with water in the upper layer of earth) (Álfkonan í Asgarðsstapa in *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 19-20). According to the folk tales, rocks near farmsteads or in the direct environment of the tún are thought to be particularly likely habitations of huldufólk and álfar. Thus, the huldufólk are geographically situated at places where the wild, the non-social, abuts cultivated land, that is, social space (cf. Hastrup 1990b, 264).

A tension of similarity and difference between humans and huldufólk can be detected in the folk tales. Humans live on farms in cultivated areas, while huldufólk have their residences in natural features in those cultivated areas. But when one looks through the surface of these natural features, one discovers a world analogous to that of humans. The huldufólk have their own houses and churches, and are most often farmers, as are their human neighbours. The myths explain that humans and huldufólk partially share their origins, and the folk tales also state that their appearance is comparable. However, huldufólk are, in general, more skilled than humans, and the artefacts which they create and own

outdo those of humans in quality and beauty. The main distinction between huldufólk and humans, though, is their invisibility versus human's visibility. In waking life, huldufólk can be perceived by Icelanders who are not skyggn, through hearing and smell, although they remain hidden from sight. This invisibility draws attention to the power of dreaming to visualize what otherwise remains hidden. Once visualised, the huldufólk turn into useful partners with whom relations of exchange can be initiated.

The tension between similarities and differences between huldufólk and humans is fundamental to practices of exchange between the two groups. Their differences are responsible for the fact that what each lacks, the other group has, and their similarities lead to a shared understanding of each other's needs, and of the value of objects. Additionally, it enables men, women, and children of both groups to be exchanged. Folk tales mention the trade of goods, food, services, and assistance between huldufólk and humans, as well as the exchange of members of the two groups. The exchange does not always lead to profitable situations for both parties. The huldufólk sometimes try to secretly exchange their old men for human babies, and avenge hostile human acts with the illness and death of livestock and people. Humans can, sometimes unintentionally, harm the huldufólk or destroy their residences. A typical example of a folk tale that addresses a reciprocal relationship between huldufólk and humans is the tale of the wife of a wealthy sheriff who lives at Burstarfell, in Vopnafjörður. A reciprocal relationship is established through the visualisation of both parties in a dream:

> Að Burstarfelli í Vopnafirði var einu sinni sýslumaður ríkur og stórættaður. Hann var kvongaður og átti rausnarbú mikið. Sá var síður að Burstarfelli að fólk lagðist til svefns á vetrum áður en ljós var kveikt í baðstofu og réði konan sýslumannsins allténd því hvað lengi var sofið. Kveikti hún sjálf ljós og vakti fólkið. Það var einhverju sinni að konan vaknar ekki sem hún var vön og fer vinnufólkið á fætur og kveikir. Vill ekki sýslumaður láta vekja hana; segir að hana muni dreyma og skuli hún njóta draumsins. Og er langt er liðið á vöku vaknar hún loksins og varpar allmæðilega öndinni. Segir hún þá draum sinn að henni þýkir maður hafa komið að sér og bedið sig upp standa og fara með sér. Hún gjörir það og fer hann með hana nokkuð frá bænum og að steini einum stórum sem stóð í landeign Burstarfells og hún þekkti. Maðurinn gengur þrisvar réttsælis í kringum steininn og sýnist þá konunni hann verða að litla en skrautlegu húsi. Leiðir hann svo konuna inn í húsið og er þar allt fagurlega umbúið. Þar sér hún kona liggur á gólfi og er mjög þunglega haldin. Kerling ein var og [í] húsinu og ekki fleira manna. Maðurinn bar þá upp erindið við konu sýslumannsins og biður hana bjarga konu sinni sem liggi á gólfi og muni deyja nema hún njóti að fulltingis mennskra manna. Sýslumannskonan gengur þá að sængurkonunni og segir: "Jesús góður

hjálpi þér." Við þetta orð brá svo að konan verður bráðum léttari og aflar það þeim öllum hinnar mestu gleði . . .
Nú er tekið til að lauga barnið og skal sýslumannskonan vera fyrir þeim starfa. Fær sængurkonan henni bauk með smyrslum í sem hún á að bera í augu barnsins um leið og hún laugar. Þetta gjörir sýslumannskonan og ætlar að smyrsli þessi muni heilnæm. Dettur henni í hug að bera þau í augu sér, en þorir það þó ekki fyrir fólkinu. Þó getur hun með lagi og svo enginn gætti brugðið fingurgómnum í hægra auga sitt. Er svo lokið lauganni og býst sýslumannskonan til heimferðar. En að skilnaði gefur sængurkonan henni dúk mjög dýran; var hann úr guðvef og allur gullofinn. Gengur svo maðurinn með sýslumannskonunni út úr húsinu og er þau koma út gengur hann þrisvar rangsælis í kringum húsið, og verður það þá aftur að steini. Fylgir hann konunni síðan heim aftur að Burstarfelli og skilur við hana. Tekur nú sýslumannskonan dúkinn undan höfði sér og sýnir til jarteikna um sögu sína. Þóttist enginn slíkan grip séð hafa af samri tegund og er svo sagt að dúkur þessi sé enn hafður að altarisklæði við kirkju þá sem Burstarfell á kirkjusókn að.
En frá sýslumannskonunni er það að segja að hún fann þá breytingu á hinu hægra auga sína sem hún hafði borið smyrslin í að nú sá hún alt hvað skeði bæði í jörð og á. Er svo sagt að nálægt Burstarfelli séu klappir miklar og björg stór; sá nú sýslumannskonan að þetta var raunar öðruvísi en sýndist og að þetta vóru allt bæir, hús og þorp stór; var það allt fullt af fólki sem hafði allt atferli sem annað fólk, sló og rakaði og yrkti tún og engjar. […] Tók sýslumannskonan mjög eftir því búnað og verklag og þótti henni sér það allt að góðu verða. […] Það var einhverju sinni að sýslumannskonan kemur í kaupstað. Og hún kemur í krambúð sér hún að kona sú er hún sat yfir forðum er innan við búðarborðið. Hefur hún tínt saman og hlaðið í fang sér ýmislegu sem fágætast var af kramvöru hjá kaupmönnum. Það sér sýslumannskonan að enginn verður var við konu þessa nema hún. Hún gengur því að borðinu og segir mjög vingjarnlega: "Og við sjáumst þá hérna aftur." Huldukonan snýr sér við mjög reiðuglega og hrækir í hægra augað á sýslumannskonunni án þess að segja nokkuð. En svo brá við að sýslumannskonan sá ekki huldukonuna upp frá því og ekkert framar en hún hafði séð áður en hún bar smyrslin í hægra augað á sér.
("Sýslumannskonan á Burstarfelli" in *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 15-16)

[Once, a wealthy and high-born sheriff[3] lived at Burstarfell in Vopnafjord. He was married, and possessed a magnificent farm. It was the custom at Burstarfelli, during the winter, for people to go to sleep before the light was turned on in the main room, and the sheriff's wife determined how long the people could sleep: She turned on the light and woke the people. One day, the woman did not wake up at the time she was accustomed to, and the servants rose on their own and lit the light. The sheriff did not want to wake her up. He said that she should finish her dream. And after a long time, she finally woke up and took a deep breath. Then, she told them her dream. It seemed to her that a man had come and asked her to stand up and follow him. She did so, and he led her some ways away from the farm, to a big rock which was situated on the land of Burstarfell, and which she knew well. The man went around it clockwise, three times, and it seemed to the woman that the stone changed into a small and fine house. He led the woman into the house, where everything was beautifully furnished. There, she saw a woman lying on the ground, sorely suffering. An old woman was the only other person present. The man then came out with his message to the sheriff's wife. He asked her to save his wife, who lay on the ground and would die if she did not receive assistance from a human. Then, the sheriff's wife went to the woman who was giving birth, and said: "Good Jesus help you". With these words, the woman gave birth, and this brought great relief to them all.

Now the child had to be bathed, and the sheriff's wife was given this task. The mother of the child gave her a pot of cream, which she had to put in the child's eyes while she bathed him. This the sheriff's wife did, and she thought that the cream must be healthy, wholesome. Then it occurred to her to also put it into her own eyes, but she did not dare, because of the huldufólk around. However, she could position the lid in such a way that no one could see how she put the top of her finger in her right eye. The sheriff's wife closed the lid again and prepared for her journey home. And when she said goodbye, the mother of the child gave her a very expensive cloth, of costly weaving and golden threads. The man followed her out of the house, and when they left the house, he turned three times around it, withershins,

3 The Icelandic word for sheriff is *sýslumaður*. Sheriffs were, initially, representatives of the (Norwegian) king in a certain district. They were simultaneously tax-collectors, police officers, and judges. This position was not abolished completely in Iceland until the 1990s, when the European Court of Human Rights judged it incompatible with basic human rights for the same officer to inquire, charge, judge, and hand down a sentence in the same case (Gunnar Karlsson 2000, 94).

and the house turned into a stone again. He accompanied her home to Burstarfell, and said farewell. The sheriff's wife took the cloth from her head, and showed it as a token of her story. No one had seen its equal, and it is said that it is still used as an altar cloth in the church of the parish to which Burstarfell belongs. (m.t.)] And about the sheriff's wife can be said that she noticed how her right eye, the one in which she had put some ointment, had changed. She now saw everything that happened both in and on the earth. It is said that close to Burstarfell many rocks and a large stone was situated; the sheriff's wife saw that in reality this was not what it seemed to be; it were farms, houses and a big village with plenty of people who behaved like other human beings, mowed the grass, raked hey and tilled the soil. […] The sheriff's wife followed closely how the work was done and found it very valuable. […] Once upon a time, the sheriff's wife went into town. And when she entered the shop, she sees that the woman she helped giving birth stands close to the counter. She has collected various things, that are rare among the merchandise. Then, the sheriff's wife notices that no one, besides herself, is aware of the woman's presence. She approaches the counter and says very friendly "Then, we meet each other again." The woman of the huldufólk turns around very angry og spits in the right eye of the sheriff's wife without saying a word. And then it happened that the sheriff's wife from that day on was unable to see the huldufólk and all the things she had seen after she had put the ointment in her right eye. ("Sýslumannskonan á Burstarfelli" in *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 15-16).

The tale has a clearly recognizable structure: One day, when the sheriff's wife slept much longer than usual, her husband said to the other people at the farm that they should let her finish her dream. The sentence used to express this, "Vill ekki sýslumaður láta vekja hana; segir að hana muni dreyma og skuli hún njóta draumsins", resembles the constructions found in the sagas. In chapter 3, I quoted "Gunnlaugs saga Ormstungu", in which this sentence is found: "Austmaðr sat hjá honum ok lét hann njóta draums sins" ("Gunnlaugs saga Ormstungu" in *ÍF*, III, 52-55), and, as I noted in chapter 2, in "Brennu-Njáls saga" we find the following remark by Kolskeggr, addressed to Hjörtr, who wants to awaken Gunnar: "Eigi skal þat," segir Kolskeggr, "njóta skal hann [Gunnar] draums síns." ("Brennu-Njáls saga" in *ÍF*, XII:155). The idea that the dreamer should not be awakened, but allowed to complete his or her dream seems to be persistent.[4] When the sheriff's wife finally awoke, she told the people of the household how a man had come to her and asked her to follow him.

4 Note too, how the quote from "Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings", presented in chapter 3, deviates from this.

She was led to the hidden world of the huldufólk, where she helped a woman of the huldufólk, who was having difficulties delivering her baby. In exchange for her assistance, the sheriff's wife received a beautiful cloth. She showed this cloth to those to whom she told her dream, as evidence of her experience.

Thus, the tale contains strong indications that the world of the huldufólk, which the sheriff's wife visited, is a real, physical world: In the first place, the members of the household observed that she slept much longer as she usually did, secondly, she brought back with her a cloth of a quality which no one had seen before, and thirdly, as the tale states, because of the ointment which the sheriff's wife has put in her eyes, she starts to behave differently. Because of the ointment, the sheriff's wife is able to see the hidden world. Realizing that the huldufólk are more skilled than humans, and have more knowledge of weather conditions, she decided to follow their ways. However, the "gift" of extended perception was taken away from her when the woman of the huldufólk, whom she had helped to give birth, discovered that she could see her.

A dream narrative not only evokes an emotional response in the audience by articulating certain elements in the narrative (cf. Crapanzano 2001, 239); Icelandic dream accounts are concerned with what one might call an ontological quest of the dreaming realm. The emotional response of the public exceeds the dream as narrative. Already, when the dreamer undergoes the experience of the dream, the people present are involved in the dreaming universe by observing the bodily behaviour of the dreamer. The emphasis is on the continuity between waking and dreaming life. However, there is awareness that the public has experienced the time of the occurrence of the dream differently. For this reason, the dream needs to be told and visualised with the help of artefacts.

Another aspect of the account of the dream of the sheriff's wife is concerned with identity, the noting of similarities and differences between humans and huldufólk. The newborn child is just as unable to see the world of the huldufólk as humans are. By putting ointment in its eyes, it acquires the ability to see what would otherwise remain hidden. The ointment is ascribed the power to permanently reveal the world of the huldufólk, but it does not have the ability to transform humans to huldufólk. The ointment gives the sheriff's wife the ability to see the world of the huldufólk and to follow their way of life, but she remains visible to humans. It is her identity that becomes confused. She stays human, but sees huldufólk, and starts to behave like them. At the same time, the huldufólk are exposed to human eyes without knowing it. In being rendered visible, their identity is transformed. They become like humans. The problem that the folk tale addresses is that through visualisation, the differences between the two beings vanish. This is due to improper exchange. The sheriff's wife gives assistance with childbirth, and receives some expensive cloth in return, but she takes ointment, as well, without giving something back. The ointment thus crosses the border between the dreaming and the waking worlds, between the hidden and the revealed spheres, as an object of what Marshall Sahlins calls negative reciprocity (Sahlins 2004, 195).

Weiner reminds us that the establishment of a distinction between the self and other can, in itself, be an intention of an exchange (Weiner in Howell 1989, 421). Sahlins formulates this somewhat differently. He suggests that, according to Marcel Mauss, "reciprocity is a 'between' relation. It does not dissolve the separate parties within a higher unity, but on the contrary, in correlating their opposition, perpetuates it" (Sahlins 2004, 170). The dissimilarity between humans and huldufólk is, principally expressed in their being respectively visible and invisible to humans, which implies an asymmetrical relationship. The huldufólk are more powerful than visible humans. This asymmetry is articulated in accounts of exchanges between huldufólk and humans. The huldufólk nearly always initiate the exchange by making themselves visible to humans in dreaming or waking life, and by expressing their wishes and needs. At the same time, the huldufólk need to relate to humans, because they are dependent on them, especially for their reproduction. The act of the huldufólk of rendering themselves visible to humans is always an initiative for relating to humans.

The initiative for contact comes from the side of the huldufólk, but humans give first, often because the huldufólk force them to (see e.g., *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 10 and the above-mentioned folk tale ibid., 15-16). Refusal to give might lead to the huldufólk's revenge. In a few cases, humans give to the huldufólk unintentionally, because they are unaware that their behaviour has helped the huldufólk. They are later rewarded. A common example of this is a person who forbids others to throw stones at a rock or a hill. Later on, it is revealed that, by so doing, he or she has prevented huldufólk from being harmed, and is rewarded (see e.g., *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 11). The ascendancy of the huldufólk over humans is also expressed by the fact that humans always accept what the huldufólk give them in return. According to the folk tales, the huldufólk determine the value of the objects given by humans. The huldufólk reward the gifts of humans, in this way ending the relationship between the two people. Once the gift is returned by the huldufólk the visualisation of the hidden sphere normally stops, and the difference between huldufólk and humans is re-established.

The difference between huldufólk and humans needs to be re-established, because the visualisation of subject and object implies a transformation. In the process of exchange, the two partners, huldufólk and humans, become, to some degree, like each other, the huldufólk becoming visible, like humans, and therefore less powerful. Humans become more powerful, because their presence in the hidden sphere makes them somewhat like huldufólk. It is thus not only that huldufólk visualize themselves, but also that humans see more than they normally do. While the relationship between humans and huldufólk as one between visible and invisible creatures must be re-established, the objects received from the hidden sphere are, during the process of exchange, visible to both parties, and remain visible after the exchange and after the dream has ended. We have, initially, an invisible and a visible group of beings that become visible to each other through dreaming. This visualisation makes it possible to circulate and

transform "objects" from both spheres. The moving of objects from the hidden to the human realm is a confirmation of the ontology of the hidden realm.

Signe Howell argues in her article, *Of Persons and Things: Exchange and Valuables among the Lio of Eastern Indonesia*, that it is important to address the nature of things. She also notes that the relationship between subjects and objects involved in the act of exchange does not mean that, when women are the object of exchange, they are reduced to things. Rather, things are incorporated in people (Howell 1989, 420). Howell finds her inspiration in the work of Mauss, who argues that "the thing given is not inactive. Invested with life, often possessing individuality, it seeks to return to what Herz called its 'place of origin' or to produce, on behalf of the clan and the native soil from which it sprang, an equivalent to replace it" (Mauss 1993, 13). The objects that Icelandic humans give to the huldufólk in the folk tales are all products or services belonging to every-day life on a farmstead. For example, the Icelanders give the huldufólk soup with some salted meat (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 9), milk (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 9, 10), and assistance with childbirth (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 15, 16, 19, 23). In return, they receive a headscarf, a scarf, a silver belt, some cloth, or women's clothes, and, as stated in the folk tales, these objects are so beautiful that no one has seen their like. An example is the following tale:

> Konu eina dreymdi kvenmann er hún þóttist vita væri huldukona; bað draumkonan hana að gefa sér mjólk fyrir barn sitt, fjórar merkur með dægri í mánuð, og setja það á tiltekinn stað í bænum, og hét konan henni því og efndi það er hún vaknaði. Setti hún mólkurask á hverju máli á vissan stað og hvarf jafnan mjólkin úr honum, og svo gekk í mánuð. En er hann var liðinn vitraðist konunni hinn sami kvenmaður og mælti að hún hefði vel gjört og skyldi hún nú eiga belti það er hún fyndi í rúmi sínu þegar hún vaknaði. Síðan hvarf konan henni og hún vaknaði; fann hún þá silfurbelti mjög vandað eins og álfkonan hafði sagt henni. (Álfkonan þakkláta in *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 10-11)
>
> [One woman dreamt of a woman she thought to be of the huldufólk; the dream woman asked her to give milk for her child . . . once a day for one month. [She was to] put it at a specific place at the farm. The woman promised to do so when she woke up. She put the milk in a small box at the time and place they had agreed upon, and the milk disappeared regularly. This went on for one month. When the month had gone by, the same [hidden] woman appeared to the human woman, and said that she had done well. She would now own a belt, which she would find in her bed when she woke up. Then the [hidden] woman left her and she woke up; she found the very desirable silver belt, just as the woman of the álfar had told her. (m.t.)]

In this folk tale, the woman of the huldufólk and the human woman meet each other in a dream, and agree that the latter will give milk to the first. The human woman does so for one month, and the milk does indeed disappear regularly. In other words, the gift is accepted, and, after one month, reciprocated with that of a silver belt. For both subjects, the woman of the huldufólk and the human woman, it is necessary to return to their own state of being. Their difference, which was correlated by the activity of exchange, is perpetuated. But the objects of the exchange undergo a permanent transformation, which is expressed in the example above by the fact that the milk becomes hidden and the silver belt of the huldufólk, visible--the dreaming woman finds the belt in her bed when she awakens.

The objects that are exchanged draw attention to social life at the time the folk tales were narrated. As I mentioned previously, the folk tales were collected in the nineteenth century, but reflect an older oral tradition. At that time, production, reproduction, and consumption all took place within the farm's fences (Gurevich 1969, Hastrup 1981, Gunnlaugsson 1988 and Hálfdanarson 1995). Milk and related products, meat, and tallow were produced at the farmstead. Because of the lack of raw materials and the harsh climate, Icelanders had to import timber, cereals, textiles, fishing gear, and horse shoes (Karlsson 2000, 166-67). Mauss' argument, that the objects of exchange are never completely separated from the people who exchange them (Mauss 1993, 13), helps one's understanding of the context in which the accounts of huldufólk can be placed. The folk tales show that the Icelanders give the huldufólk "objects" that are related to the farmstead, such as soup, meat, and milk. The Icelanders also contribute to the reproduction of the huldufólk by assisting with the delivery of a child, by avoiding harming or killing huldufólk, through the exchange of old men of the huldufólk for human babies, or through the negative exchange of young human women by the huldufólk. The Icelanders give the huldufólk what they have, and, in a way, what they are. The huldufólk, on the other hand, often give textiles and, as the above example shows, a silver belt. A parallel with import and export products, representing a relationship between the Icelandic farmstead and the foreign world, does not seem to be too farfetched.

It is interesting to see that Icelanders play a role in the reproduction of the huldufólk. In other words, humans need to give huldufólk "life giving elements". According to several anthropological studies, it is the other way around in many societies. Ancestors and spiritual beings offer, through rituals of exchange, the "life giving force" responsible for the reproduction of society. Anthropologists have used this as an argument for the reason it is important to include the dead and other spiritual beings in studies on exchange (e.g., see Howell 1989; Barraud et al. 1994; Platenkamp 1997). Signe Howell, for example, argues that the inclusion of the dead and spiritual beings moves our attention away from the realm of interpersonal or inter-group relationships, to the socio-cosmological domain (Howell 1989, 422). As I will illustrate in the next chap-

ter, relations between the living and the dead are, indeed, significant to the continuation of Icelandic society, but this is different for the huldufólk, as illustrated above. Humans and huldufólk are regarded as coming from shared origins, but once created, humans are needed to reproduce huldufólk. In exchange for the assistance humans give with the reproduction of the huldufólk, they receive objects that are associated with the foreign world, such as textiles. The huldufólk also reward humans more generally, with a happy and wealthy life (see e.g., Bjartmarsdóttir 1982, 326 and *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, III, 134, 141-45, 156-60).

I suggest that human intervention in the reproduction of the huldufólk through food and aid with birth, and, thereby, the exchange between humans and huldufólk, reflects the need to reproduce the other, in order to maintain the self. With respect to this, Gísli Pálsson made a brief, interesting remark in his 1991 book, *Coastal Economies, Cultural Accounts. Human Ecology and Icelandic Discourse*. In his analysis of the position of fish in the Icelandic world view, he puts forward the question of why Icelanders preferred fish to terrestrial animals, as vehicles for metaphorical expression. He suggests that the dissociation of fish from the world of ordinary humans makes them interesting vehicles for disembodied thought. And he adds: "the only Others locally available and invested with human qualities were just as invisible as fish (and powerful foreigners) and their residence remained equally unknown. These were the so-called 'hidden people' *huldufólk*" (Pálsson 1991, 94-96). Gísli Pálsson suggests here that Iceland's increasing isolation was what made the huldufólk significant "others", who served to acknowledge the existence of the Icelandic people themselves. As I mentioned in the introduction, in 1380 the Danish King Olav inherited the Norwegian throne, and thus Iceland, which had been allied to the Norwegian Crown since 1262, came under Danish supremacy. At the end of the fifteenth century, Iceland became situated at the outskirts of the Danish Kingdom, instead of at the centre of the North Atlantic empire, as it had been, under the king of Norway (Karlsson 2000, 104). In the centuries that followed, Danish power became increasingly invisible. Simultaneously, the Icelanders became invisible to the outside world. The Danish kings made several attempts to place restrictions on trade between Icelanders and foreigners, resulting in a trade monopoly from 1602 until 1855. The Icelanders themselves did not own any vessels that could sail long distances, and the country was at that time ruled by local sheriffs derived from the small Icelandic aristocracy (Karlsson 2000, 153-55). The Danish supremacy and other non-Icelanders were largely invisible.

Gísli Pálsson's suggestion resembles that of Jonathan Wylie, who discusses the position of the huldufólk in the Faroese social universe . The Faroe Islands , a society neighbouring Iceland, have a rather similar history. Both the Faroe Islands and Iceland came under Danish supremacy when Norway was formally united with Denmark by the treaty of Kalmar in 1397, but whereas Iceland became a republic in 1944, the Faroe Islands have still not gained full independence from Denmark. On the basis of his analysis of the legend of Snæbjørn

(*Færøske folkesagn og æventyr* 1898-1901, 29-34), Wylie suggests that the huldufólk tradition illustrates that "the Faroese found themselves looking two ways at once: toward a metropolitan society that very largely controls their economic and political relations with the outside world, and toward the local environment from which a living must be made" (Wylie 1987, 54). The Faroese tried to command their borders by populating their border area with huldufólk, and controlling these beings in their folk literature (Wylie 1987, 54-56). Wylie suggests that, at least in the eighteenth century, the Faroese huldufólk played a role in defending the island against the increasing influence of the Danish authorities. Gísli Pálsson focuses more on the invisible roots of power exercised in Icelandic society that became represented by the invisibility of the hidden world.

This difference reflects the dissimilar character of the Icelandic folk tales of huldufólk, and those of the Faroe Islands. While the legend of Snæbjørn (Jakobsen 1898-1901, 29-34) explicitly deals with political life, and the relationship between the islands and the Danish kingdom, the Icelandic folk tales deal with local scenes. But both the spatial positioning of the huldufólk at the outskirts of the human social world and my analysis of exchange between huldufólk and humans, indicate that the huldufólk played the role of Others, creating and maintaining Icelandic identity during a period in which others were lacking. The huldufólk did play a role in reproducing the social order, although less directly than the spiritual beings in the societies that Howell (1989), Barraud et al. (1994), and Platenkamp (1997) studied. By being acknowledged by the huldufólk, and engaged with them, the self was not only reproduced, but also made a topic of negotiation. Certain aspects of Icelandic identity and moral conduct were articulated. This is also a feature of encounters with huldufólk in contemporary Iceland.

The contemporary period. Huldufólk between nature and culture

In the spring of 2000, a man told me the following story:

> Around 1970, a house was built, a farm, here in the countryside, a new house, [because] the old one could no longer be used. When it was ready, a couple moved in. On the first night, the woman, the lady [of the house], dreamt that a woman came to her. This woman greeted the lady of the house and asked whether she might be allowed to stay with her. "Yes, yes that is alright," said the woman, and then she woke up. She is sometimes aware of this woman in her house . . . So she is in the house, this woman, although no one sees her . . . She [the lady of the house] thinks that this is a woman of the huldufólk. (m.t.)

Later on, I visited the woman of whom this story speaks. She confirmed that she had dreamt about the woman of the huldufólk, who had asked her whether she could move into her newly built house. She told me that she still notices the presence of the woman now and then. Here, again, dreaming visualizes and ex-

plains what is felt or perceived only vaguely in waking experience. The man who had mentioned this story to me in the first place also told me about his own dealings with the huldufólk. He said that he never had seen them himself, but that others have seen them on his land. One of these people, a well-known skyggn woman called Erla Stefánsdóttir, had told him that huldufólk had lived in the rocks on his land in the 1970s, but they had moved away a few years later. When the farmer wanted to build a new house on his property back in the 1970s, the best location he could find was near a rock and he was not quite sure whether this would cause any problems with the beings who were perhaps already living there. Therefore, he made three heaps of sand on the spot he wished to construct his house and said aloud: "I am planning to build a house here. If someone has any objection, let me know during the following three nights." No being appeared in his dreams during these three nights and he concluded that he was allowed to build his house at the place he had in mind. He told me that he was never troubled and added: "It does not cost me anything to perform this precaution, so why not do so?"

A woman told me that when she was a child she could often smell coffee when passing by a small hill near her home. Her mother had seen a little girl of the huldufólk playing near the hill, and she and her siblings were not allowed to approach. The woman mentioned to me that in her childhood, she was afraid, whenever she walked near this hill. When a relative of hers took over some part of the land, he destroyed the hill. The woman thinks that this may be the reason that there are so many problems in her relative's family. The daughter of this same woman also told me that in her childhood she had noticed the smell of coffee near another rock, close to the house where she herself had grown up.

These stories indicate how close to humans the huldufólk live. In Hrunamannahreppur, the few people who could recall where residences of huldufólk were found, pointed out to me natural features, such as rocks, large stones, and hills, often in cultivated areas near farms.

The work of journalist Bjarni Harðarson confirms that huldufólk share the same geographical space as humans. He has asked the people of Árnesþing, the area in which Hrunamannahreppur is located, where *draugar* (the dead who return to the living), huldufólk, *skrímsli* (monsters), *nykrar* (horse-like creatures living in water), *álagabléttir* (spots under a spell or taboo), and trolls were and are to be found. He has created maps on the basis of this information. These maps show that the further one moves away from a settlement, the less likely it is that one will encounter huldufólk (Harðarson 2001).

The accounts of huldufólk draw attention to areas that do not properly fit into the otherwise clear conceptual distinction between cultivated areas and the wild. Rocks and steep hills are striking features in the levelled and fertile landscape around the farms. These natural sites in cultivated fields can be surrounded by a taboo and danger. When a taboo is related to such a site, the place is called álagabléttur. The taboo resting on these sites is often linked to álfar or huldufólk. The álagabléttir (pl.) are then seen as the land where the huldufólk

live, and which they use for the production of hay to feed their livestock in wintertime. However, not only huldufólk are associated with álagabléttir. Some people told me that at those particular places the remains of old houses or farms are to be found. In such cases, it is not thought to be the huldufólk who defend their property, but the dead who protect their former residences.

Figure 8. Huldufólk and humans: each other's neighbours. A knoll near the farm Túnsberg in Hrunamannahreppur to which stories on huldufólk are related. Photo: the author.

The taboo associated with álagabléttir is directed towards the transformation of these natural sites into cultivated areas, and indirectly aimed at maintaining the boundaries between the wild, and cultivated land. This can be illustrated by the following event: During my fieldwork in Hrunamannahreppur in the summer of 2001, I visited one of the farms in the area, and observed the milking of cows. After the milking, the employee of the farm showed me an álagablettur on their field. This particular álagabléttur is an oval spot of about six square meters, where the grass grew wildly in the otherwise--at that time--mowed field.

Figure 9. The Álagablettur here discussed. Photo: the author.

The man and I were walking on the taboo spot itself, and I asked him whether we were allowed to do so. He seemed to be a bit surprised at my question, but answered that there was no problem. The cows also walk over the grass without experiencing any trouble. The only thing that is not allowed is to mow the grass. He told me how careful he always was, while mowing, to never get too close with his tractor. Later on, at the farm, he discussed with his relatives whether, as he assumed, the place had become bigger during the past years. He had the feeling that he turned larger circles every year in his attempt not to touch the álagablettur. His relatives said that it could well be so, and the woman added, directing her remark to me, that she simply finds it a nice tradition to keep the place unspoiled.

At first sight, it seems quite strange that, while driving a tractor, one is very anxious to not get too close to the spot, but that walking over the place presents no problem at all. In the 1970s, the psychologist Erlendur Haraldsson investigated the ideas and experiences of Icelanders with álagabléttir: eleven percent was certain of their existence; fifty-seven percent of the people he asked thought it likely that they exist; nineteen percent thought it unlikely; and thirteen percent had no opinion on the subject (Haraldsson 1978, 27). Only thirteen Icelanders of the 848 questioned said that they had experienced problems after they had come in contact with the spot. A second question Erlendur Haraldsson posed these thirteen people was, what they had done with regard to the álagablettur concerned. Six of them said that they had cut the grass, and four of them had removed the place, or leveled it by using explosives. In the three other cases, specific information was not provided (Haraldsson 1978, 11). As I mentioned in the introduction, in 2006 and 2007, Erlendur Haraldsson's research was repeated by The Social Science Research Institute of the University of Iceland on the initiative of Terry Gunnell. Of the 666 respondents, forty-one percent thought that it is possible, nineteen percent that it is likely and nine per cent that it is sure that disturbing an álagabléttir would lead to adversity. A comparison between the two surveys is somewhat difficult due to the deviation in categories of answers, but the responses point to a slight decrease in the amount of people who state to believe that trouble is caused by violating these spots. Three percent of the respondents has experienced some kind of adversity after they disturbed an álagabléttir. This is double the number found in the 1970s. The recent survey also asked about the means of disturbance: Twenty-six percent had mown the grass, thirty-two percent had leveled the area, for example with the help of explosives, and forty-two percent had turned to other means (these three categories were given in the survey). A question was added to the recent survey, regarding the kinds of problems experienced by people who had disturbed the álagabléttir: In twenty-one percent of the cases, an accident had occurred; sixteen percent said that it had led to illness; twenty-six percent mentioned the loss of possessions, and thirty-seven percent confronted problems of a different kind (unspecified category). Sixty-eight percent of the respondents who had experienced these problems interpreted them as vengeance of the huldufólk or álfar. The rest of

the respondents thought it was related to other beings (Arnaldsdóttir, et al. 2007).

Thus, a taboo rests on the transformation of these natural spots into cultivated space. Walking does not transform the álagablettur, but mowing the grass and levelling does turn this natural site into cultivated land. Transforming these places is risking the breakdown of machinery, illness, and accidents and, in the worst cases, the death of humans and livestock. The vengeance of the huldufólk is directed against the potential transformers of nature into cultivated areas, such as machinery and humans, and/or the representatives of cultivation, livestock, and humans. These natural features in cultivated areas with which the huldufólk are associated attract attention as being out of place. As soon as a tradition of narration--dream accounts about encounters with huldufólk, or stories about smelling, hearing, or perceiving them in waking life--has been established around the natural site, the spot and the narratives reinforce each other.

In contemporary Iceland, narratives circulate, which deal with the huldufólk's resistance to human attempts to transform natural sites into cultivated areas. Road-building is one of the principal examples of problems that arise from the necessity of levelling or removing rocks and hills. When machinery breaks down or road workers become ill, newspapers may start to speculate as to whether the problems are caused by huldufólk. Journalists look for support for their theory in an already existing narrative tradition of huldufólk in the surroundings. The problems and media coverage also attract the attention of people who may then start to investigate the cause of the problems by attending their dreams, or other signs that might indicate the presence of huldufólk. The media play an important role in spreading stories of huldufólk (Hafstein 2000, 93), and create or reinforce the culturalisation of such natural features. An example of an article about huldufólk is found in one of Iceland's national newspapers, *Morgunblaðið*. The article mentions two bulldozers that frequently broke down. They had been used to remove soil at a hill in Leirdal, in the town of Kópavogur, near Reykjavík. People said that there was a big álfar dwelling in this hill. The problems that occurred were small--something would become disconnected or a line would break apart--but, it is said, they always occurred near the hill, for which there was no technical explanation (Álfum kennt um bilanir í tveimur ýtum í Leirdal in *Morgunblaðið* 1996, 7 February).

Huldufólk, from invisibility to visibility

In the summer of 2000, I visited an Icelandic woman who sometimes feels the presence of huldufólk in her living room, and in small stones and rocks in and close to her garden. She showed me stones that she had painted with red hats and little faces. These stones represented huldufólk or álfar. Several inhabitants in the area have bought the small figures from her, and placed them in their gardens like garden gnomes. This woman is not the only person who has transformed the huldufólk from hidden into visible beings. In fact, huldufólk are

increasingly visualised in contemporary society. The beings whose existence depended on words, as the subject of many narratives, have now also received an image.

Another interesting and related change that I noticed, was that several people in Hrunamannahreppur--people living in the countryside--spoke of huldufólk as beings of the past. Hastrup warns against interpreting narratives in the past tense as statements of past conditions in Icelandic society (Hastrup 1990a, 262), but I do not think that this applies to the huldufólk tradition that I encountered in Hrunamannahreppur. Only a few inhabitants of this area were able to tell me of recent encounters with these beings, and those who had more lively encounters often also displayed an interest in New Age philosophy. Furthermore, the children on the farm where I stayed, during the summer of 2001, did not mention any experiences with huldufólk, nor did their friends. Icelandic folk tales are a common subject of their education, but the tales are taught as part of Iceland's literary heritage, and of the past. Bearing this in mind, the ethnologist, Jón Jónsson, has done research on fear among Icelandic children. He came to the conclusion that nowadays, Icelandic children are more afraid of sharks, crocodiles, lions, death, and robbers than of huldufólk and álfar, who, several decades ago, could be used to keep children away from dangerous places in the landscape. In present-day Iceland, álfar are presented as small creatures with pointed ears, dressed in colourful clothes, tapering hats, and possessing some magical abilities (Jónsson 2000, 417-18).

The disappearance of huldufólk from the daily narratives in the countryside, except among those who also have an interest in New Age philosophy, does not mean that they have generally vanished. In the late 1990s, I was told that huldufólk were on the move to the Vestfjörður, a scarcely populated area in the Northwest of Iceland. They were seen as refugees, chased away by the expansion of human interference in Icelandic nature. At the same time, however, and this development seems to be more persistent, the huldufólk are moving in the opposite direction, into villages and urban areas.[5] Nowadays, one can meet huldufólk not only in the surroundings of farms, but also in parks, gardens, and houses, and in and around Reykjavík. One of the best-known hidden populations is said to reside in Hafnafjörður, a town near Reykjavík.

Another interesting change that may be noticed is that the huldufólk have become the subjects of research. Huldufólk and related phenomena (*Huldufólk og skyld fyrirbæri*) are the main themes of questionnaire number eighty-two sent out by the Ethnological Department of the National Museum of Iceland. The aim was to collect information on the huldufólk, before narratives about them

5 The idea of the huldufólk moving into urban spaces is my own. It is not recognised in the contemporary huldufólk tradition, which states that huldufólk have been close to urban areas for a long time. Their habitat in urban spaces may be subject to negotiation with humans, sometimes resulting in the movement of the hidden peoplecolour from the urban area into the wild again, thus moving in the opposite direction.

died out with Iceland's elderly population. This kind of research, but within a different framework, has also been carried out by some members of *Sálarrannsóknarfélag Íslands* (The Spiritual Society of Iceland). They took the initiative of collecting tales of the behaviour and customs of huldufólk and álfar. Magnús Skarphéðinsson, chairman of this society, has, on the basis of these tales, established a school about álfar (*Álfaskóla*) in Reykjavík, intended to rescue these tales from disappearing, with demise of the generation of Icelanders born before the modernisation of the Icelandic society. Descriptions of recent encounters between skyggn people and huldufólk and álfar have also been added to the collection. The tales are used to teach students of the Álfaskóla--often foreigners--about the history of the huldufólk and álfar and their way of living, and a comparison is made between Icelandic hidden beings and those existing in other countries (*Námvísir* 1997, 35-38). Interestingly, the knowledge of the hidden beings that is transmitted in this discourse is actually quite detailed, and differs from the way in which the huldufólk are described in the folk tales. While huldufólk in the past were called both álfar and huldufólk, nowadays a distinction is made between them. In an interview with a journalist from *Morgunblaðið*, Magnús Skapheðinsson explains that huldufólk are very similar in appearance to humans, and number between seven thousand and twenty thousand. Álfar, in contrast, are small creatures varying in height from five to seventeen centimetres, and they are much more numerous than huldufólk (Ferðast um huliðsheima. *Morgunblaðið* 1997, June 15).

Erla Stefánsdóttir, the aforementioned skyggn woman who saw huldufólk on the farmer's land, has made a further classification. Her visions have shown her that the Icelandic landscape is inhabited with *ljósálfar* (light álfar), *blómálfar* (flower álfar), *dvergar* (dwarfs), *jarðdvergar* (gnomes), *tívar* (mountain spirits) and *ljúflingar* ("lovelings"). The ljúflingar in the folk tales were (young) men of the huldufólk, but according to Erla, they form a separate group. She describes them as "slender beings, the size of 10-year-old children, dressed in light colourful clothing, who live in areas with rich vegetation, like hedgerows and woodlands" (Erla Stefánsdóttir 1993). The visions of skyggn Icelanders play an important role in keeping the hidden sphere alive, but also in changing the conception of these spheres among those Icelanders who only can see the hidden sphere while dreaming. Skyggn persons, who can see hidden spheres while awake, have more authority than those who have encountered huldufólk while dreaming. Another example of the role skyggn people play, nowadays, in shaping the narrative tradition of huldufólk is the following: A man whom I regularly visited described to me how a little blómálfur (flower álfur), had, a few days before, found its way to his hand. He demonstrated this to me, by acting as if it were happening again. He showed me how the little creature had climbed up to him from the floor, and crawled onto the palm of his hand. The man told me that he had not seen the blómálfur, but a skyggn person who was visiting him had described the appearance of the creature, and told him how to position his arm and hand so the blómálfur was at ease.

Thus, the observations of hidden spheres by skyggn people may be visualised, to enable others to also experience these beings. In this way, the values that the huldufólk and álfar present can be communicated to a larger group, and also to non-Icelanders. Other examples are drawings and descriptions by Erla Stefánsdóttir, of the different groups of hidden beings which exist in Iceland. On the basis of her observations, a map has been constructed, showing the exact dwelling places of the huldufólk, álfar, and other hidden beings in the town Hafnafjörður. This Hidden Worlds Map is used in the promotion of the town, primarily to tourists, and is available in both Icelandic and English. Attention is drawn again to the interface between culture and nature, but in a different way than the previously-discussed accounts, which principally addressed the struggle for space. The following quotation, from the English version of the map of hidden beings in Hafnafjörður illustrates this:

> Hafnafjörður has one of the richest elf and spirit populations among all towns in Iceland. The lava is especially alive with them, with more than 20 types of dwarfs, four types of gnomes and all manner of elfin beings. The aim of this map is to point out to people visiting Hafnafjörður the best places to sit down and contemplate--linger for a while and feel nature--feel part of nature--feel nature within them, for nature's hidden spirits are its inner manifestation, not to have faith in, but delight. Such places could therefore inspire people to treat the land with consideration, feel love towards nature and respect for mother earth. The seeker who contemplates a single tiny flower or stone can find an entrance into the realm of truth, where the soul of nature dwells. Erla Stefánsdóttir, sjáandi [the one who sees]. (*Hafnarfjörður Hidden Worlds Map* 1993)

The image of Hafnafjörður as a town of hidden beings is supported by Hafnafjörður's official website. In 2004, the town's website showed pictures of children, wearing masks and standing in a landscape of lava rocks. These children represented the huldufólk.[6] In 2008, these pictures were removed, but the town is still promoted as a place where the huldufólk are especially respected.[7] The dream of a woman who has lived many years near these rocks was used on the older website, to legitimize the presence of the hidden beings in certain rocks in the town. This woman dreamt that she was invited to enter a palace of the álfar, called Hamarinn. A woman dressed in white guided her around this splendid place. While walking about, they met many costumed people. They bowed whenever they saw the álf woman. The homepage relates that this dream experience indicates that the álfar living in this rock are of royal descent. Thus,

6 Former website of Hafnafjörður, http://www.hafnarfj.is/hafnarfj.nsf/pages/alfar

7 For more visual representations of the álfar and huldufólk, also see the website, http://www.icelandicwonders.com

in these official discourses, dream accounts are also still ascribed a role in revealing the hidden spheres. Together with the accounts of skyggn people, they provide information about how the beings and their worlds look, and the values they represent.

The values of the hidden beings as guardians of Icelandic nature and its spiritual quality return in other contemporary accounts of hidden beings. The following letter from a woman, published in *Nýir tímar* ("New Times"), a magazine for New Religious Movements in Iceland, illustrates how encounters with hidden beings are used to comment on environmental issues:

> Fyrir nokkrum arum ferðaðist ég með fleiri fólki um hluta af Vestfjörðum. Einn daginn þar sem við tjölduðum, ákvað ég að leggjast út af í grasið og reyna að ná andlegu sambandi við huldufólk í bjarginu fyrir ofan tjáldbúðir okkar. Ég á frekar létt með að sjá ýmislegt hulið, svo sem huldufólk, álfa og fleira. Fljótlega birtist mér unglingsstúlka. Hún kynnti sig en því miður man ég ekki lengur nafn hennar. . . Ég fór að spyrja hana út í búskaparhætti þeirra. Þá náði hún í móður sína. Hún var jafnkurteis og alúðleg og dóttirin. Þær voru áþekkar okkur mannfólkinu í líkamshlutföllum en heldur grennri og á einhvern hátt fíngerðari. Móðurinn sagði að búskaparhættir þeirra væru öðruvísi en okkar mannanna. Þau fylgdust engu að síður af forvitni með tæknibrölti okkar mannanna, en enn sem komið væri, vekti lítið af þeim áhuga þeirra sakir vandamálanna sem tæknin skapaði okkur, sbr. Súra regnið, jarðvegsmengun o. fl. Þau væru sjálf að þróa tækni í þjóðfélagi sínu en það væri meira inn á kosmískum lögmálum náttúrunnar sjálfrar. Þetta syndi hún mér dæmi um, en það er erfitt að lýsa því með orðum því það felst í skynjun. Til dæmis sýndi hún mér inn í forláta grasagarð sem hún hafði sjálf yfirumsjón með. Þar voru afurðir garðsins notaðar til matargerðar, litunar á fötum, lækninga, reykelsisgerðar og fleira fyrir samfélag þeirra. Hún sýndi mér hvernig hún fór inn á orkusvið plánetunnar og náði samband við þær og fékk þannig vitneskju um eiginleika henna og möguleika á nýtingu. (Huldufólkið í *Nýir Tímar* 1994, 19)
>
> [A few years ago I travelled with several people in a part of the Vestfjörður.[8] One day, I decided to lie down in the grass, at the place where we were camping, in order to establish spiritual contact with the huldufólk in the rock opposite our tent. It is rather easy for me to see what is hidden, such as huldufólk, álfar, etc. Soon a young girl appeared to me. She introduced herself, but unfortunately I have forgotten her name . . . I asked her about their agricultural customs. Then

8 As I mentioned previously, this is the scarcely populated area in the Northwest of Iceland, where, some assume, the huldufólk have moved.

she went to seek her mother. She [the mother] was just as polite and cordial as the daughter. Physically, they were similar to us, humans, but more slender of build. The mother said that their agricultural customs were different from those of us, men. They did follow, not least out of curiosity, the technological developments among us men, but what we had achieved had not attracted their interest, because of the problems our tools create, for example acid rain and erosion. In their society, they developed tools in line with the cosmological laws of nature. She showed me an example of this, but it is difficult to describe because it evoked only a feeling. She showed me, for example, a magnificent garden, which was under her supervision. The crops of the garden were used, among other things, for food, colouring clothes, and for medical and aromatic purposes. She showed me how she came in contact with the energy space of planets, and how she in this way became conscious of her own characteristics and abilities. (m.t.)]

Thus, this letter illustrates yet another change between huldufólk in the folk tales collected in the nineteenth century, and contemporary huldufólk. The huldufólk appearing in the folk tales did not express concerns about acid rain and erosion. Nowadays, they do, and in the discourse on the huldufólk and other hidden beings, their task is to watch over the (reinvented) traditional values of Icelandic life, as the society moves along in its expansion of urban areas, and improvement of the country's infrastructure. Contemporary huldufólk belong to a modernist ideology that criticizes the outcomes of its own creations.

Concluding remarks

The words of Heraclitus, noting that those who sleep return to their own [world] (Binswanger 1986, 97-98), are partly true of Icelandic dream sharing. As I have argued, the experience of dreaming is social, according to the Icelandic dream theory presented here, in the sense that the sphere encountered while dreaming interacts with the sphere encountered while awake, and that dreamers can initiate relationships with beings which are hidden in waking life, but are, nevertheless, believed to exist. However, although the dreaming experience is social, it is not an experience that dreamers directly share with one another, other than in the waking state, translating it in words or images. The need for this translation represents the acknowledgment of a distinction between the dreaming and the waking condition.

The words and images reflect how objects, food, knowledge, actions, and beings are supposed to transcend the boundaries between the waking and the dreaming spheres. A historical investigation of the circulation of objects between the two spheres illustrates continuities and discontinuities in the narrative tradition of huldufólk. I have compared the "folk tale period" with the contemporary period, presenting Icelandic life as I encountered it during my fieldwork.

In both periods, the huldufólk live "in the knolls and rocks in the immediate neighbourhoods of the farmsteads [and houses], that is, in those small points where the wild broke through the cultivated surface" (Hastrup 1990b, 264). Continuity is also found in the idea that the huldufólk make a living from nature. Many are engaged in agriculture, a few (also) in fishing and trade, as were Icelanders, before the modernisation of society. But while the folk tales primarily stress the difficulties that arise from making a living from nature in a country such as Iceland, the contemporary accounts emphasize the importance of living in harmony with nature. The contemporary accounts do not deal with scarcity, but rather with the richness of a life that is in harmony with spiritual values ascribed to nature.

Looking more closely at exchanges between the two groups in both periods, clear discontinuities can be identified. In the "folk tale period", exchanges between huldufólk and people reflect a negotiation of identity. The huldufólk are reproduced by humans through food, assistance with birth, and young women, in order to be acknowledged and maintain the self. In the second period, the exchange is of a different nature, constantly centering on a negotiation of space. The two groups live in different spheres, but, geographically speaking, they inhabit the same space. Huldufólk and humans live so close to one another, that the accounts address people moving into huldufólk space, and huldufólk moving into human space. The examples from my fieldwork, discussed above, demonstrate this: a woman of the huldufólk moves into a newly built house; a man wishes to build a house on land that might be owned by the huldufólk; people invade and destroy a huldufólk area, in order to build roads or to increase the production of their land. For these last actions, they are punished by the huldufólk. Livestock and people become ill or die, and machinery breaks down. Only when humans ask for permission, or carefully negotiate, can the huldufólk's vengeance be avoided. In the "folk tale period", the huldufólk usually initiated an exchange, and determined the value of the objects. In the contemporary period, exchange is often negative, and the initiative lies in many cases with humans, not with the huldufólk. Humans invade huldufólk areas, and huldufólk resist.

The central position of the negotiation of space indicates that, in contemporary Iceland, huldufólk are part of the debate concerning the invasion of nature by cultivation. The question is how a harmonious relationship with nature can be maintained, while accommodating the needs of modernity, such as the construction of houses and the improvement of the country's infrastructure. The harmonious relationship with nature represents the need to include the Icelandic past within a modern identity. The accounts of huldufólk reflect a conflict between expanding urban areas and the countryside (cf. Hafstein 2000, 92-93). Farming life, which stands at the core of the Icelandic social universe (Hastrup 1990b, 133, Hafstein 2000, 98), is remembered in the present through the huldufólk. The world of the huldufólk does not present a mirror world of Icelandic society, in the sense that it reflects an identical image. Nor does it represent

farming life as it was in the past, but an idealised image of a farming society, to which contemporary society is compared. This ideal image is constantly subject to change, and used to establish norms and rules for how Icelandic life ought to be (cf. Hafstein 2000, 95). Accounts of the huldufólk construct continuity between the old peasant society and contemporary Iceland. However, because the image of the past is idealised, it is characterised both by discontinuities and continuities.

Another change that I detected in the representation of the huldufólk, is that they are increasingly visualised. Encounters with huldufólk in dreams or in waking life are still narrated verbally, in contemporary Iceland. Why, then, is there also the need to visually represent the huldufólk, to draw, measure, and count them, to describe their lives in detail, and to locate their residences on a map? These changes in representations of the huldufólk and their lives should be placed in the context of the increasing influence of a modernist cosmology in Icelandic society. The lives of huldufólk, who share the same space as humans, although not the same sphere, became revealed when the Icelanders started to explore and penetrate the landscape. Formerly unknown places in the landscape, which had been conceptually hidden spheres, became known, because what was formerly unknown in the world is, in contemporary Iceland, submitted to investigation. This investigation is not simply the outcome of the cultural invasion of the Icelandic landscape, but arose more from an interaction between this invasion and the idea that hidden and unknown parts of the waking world could be explored. The tradition of the huldufólk could, through these developments, move in two directions. The accounts of encounters with the huldufólk could disappear, because their very essence--their invisibility--had been taken away from them. They could also be granted the right to exist, when they adapted to the ontological demands of modernist ideology, by acquiring an image and being submitted to semi-scientific investigations and activities, such as the mapping of their residences, their measurement, and a detailed study of their way of life, in comparison to that of spiritual beings in other countries.

As I have demonstrated, both developments can be traced. On the one hand, the huldufólk have largely disappeared from daily narratives, especially in the Icelandic countryside. On the other hand, they have been submitted to a semi-scientific epistemology. The traditional cosmology, which presupposes that hidden temporal and spatial spheres and beings exist out there in the world, and that these spheres can be observed by moving there, is legitimised by an imitation of scientific knowledge production. Skyggn people investigate what is hidden, store, map, draw, and publish their results, in order to convince other skyggn people, and those who are unable to see hidden spheres, of the nature and function of the world.

Another important point is that the storing, mapping, and standardisation of the experiences of skyggn people, with huldufólk, make it possible to communicate the collected information to a much larger group of people than existed formerly. Both Icelanders and foreigners can partake in the huldufólk tradition,

and thus in the ideology that the traditions represent. What this does prove is that the modernist cosmology, to which the scientific epistemology is central, is more powerful in the official discourse (the mayor of Hafnafjörður has written the introduction to the *Hidden Worlds Map* 1993) than the traditional cosmology. However, as I will demonstrate in more detail in chapter 6, one cosmology does not necessarily oust others. The modernist cosmology is used to reinforce and legitimize the traditional cosmology. The method of gaining knowledge of the world of the huldufólk is still one of subjective experience, namely of engagement, whether while dreaming or--for skyggn people--in waking life. However, once this knowledge is gathered, it is compared, standardised, stored, and transmitted in an institutionalised way. In other words, the ontological status of the huldufólk world is first confirmed by an epistemology based on a subjective experience. The subsequent step is to give this subjective knowledge an objective appearance, in order to transmit it in official discourse. The validity of traditional elements of Icelandic society is thus confirmed through a semi-scientific epistemology, creating, in this way, continuity between past, present, and future, and the modernist cosmology is celebrated for being able to investigate and control the world.

Chapter 5 The Living and the Dead

Introduction

Death is a major topic of Icelandic dream accounts at all times, and is also considered the most common means of communication between the living and the dead. In common with the arguments on dreams and religion of Edward Tylor (1891, 428-29, 443) and James Frazer (1993, 181), Wilhelm Henzen (1890) states that the appearance of the dead in dreams has been crucial to the "prehistory of the mind" (*die Urgeschichte des Geistes*). With regard to the Icelandic material, he suggests the existence of an etymological relationship between the Icelandic word *draumur* ("dream") and *draugur* (a dead person who returns to the living), arguing that draumur initially had the meaning of a dream in which the dead appear:

> Diese ungeheure Wichtigkeit der Erscheinung von Toten für die Urgeschichte des Geistes, verbunden mit dem Umstande, dass das an. Draugr niemals auf andre dämonische Erscheinungen, als eben auf Totenerscheinungen bezogen wird, macht es warscheinlich, dass auch das ahd. Troc und as. Gidrôg ursprünglich nur von Toten, die im Träume erschienen, gebraucht wurde, das Wort 'Traum', also anfangs nur die Bedeutung 'Totentraum' hatte . . . (Henzen 1890, 14-15)
>
> [This enormous importance of the appearance of the dead for the prehistory of the mind, combined with the fact that the concept of draugr never has been based on other demonic appearances than on appearances of the dead, makes it likely that even the words Troc and Gi-drôg originally only were used for the dead who appeared in dreams, and the word 'dream', originally only referred to 'dream of the dead'. (m.t.)]

This chapter acknowledges the significance of encounters between the dead and the living in Icelandic dream accounts and society itself. I address here a striking continuity in a practice of naming, wherein the dead appear in the dreams of pregnant women or their relatives, expressing their wish to transfer their names to newborn children. There are indications that this practice has existed for at least a thousand years. This manner of naming, which seems to involve the transmission of spirit or, at least, of certain personal characteristics, has, in the older literature, been interpreted as a sign that belief in rebirth was common in Iceland (e.g. see Storm 1893, 199-222; Turville-Petre 1964, 194-95; Molenaar 1982, 48; Eiríksson 1992, 95). However, an analysis of contemporary dream accounts demonstrates that this practice is still widespread in present-day Iceland, despite the influence of Christianity and modernity.

This chapter, then, challenges the widely accepted idea that the presence of the belief in rebirth in a Western European society is nothing more than a post-modern reconstruction of Indic religion. I also dispute the idea that reincarnation or rebirth need be part of a well-articulated and inherently logical cosmology. Additionally, I argue that ideas on rebirth cannot be understood fully, without taking local ideas on personhood into account. Gananath Obeyesekere writes in his foreword to the volume *Amerindian Rebirth. Reincarnation belief among the North American Indians and Inuit* (1994), that the fundamental idea in reincarnation belief is that each ancestor or close kinsperson is reborn into the human world (Obeyesekere 1994, xvi-xvii). This implies a circular notion of time in which no spirit is "lost". I suggest that when a belief in rebirth appears together with a notion of personhood which recognizes the existence of multiple selves or multiple spirits, we are not necessarily dealing with a circular notion of time, nor with a complete reproduction of persons. Rather, as we see in Iceland, "rebirth" means a merging of selves, of the "ancestor" and of the newly born individual, consisting again of several spirits. Thus, despite the Icelandic belief in the existence of rebirth at birth, it is a new self which comes to life. This is not related to a cosmology or belief which appears fragmented because of the influences of modernity and Christianity, but is a crucial aspect of Icelandic cosmology.

The living dead

The Old Norse literature shows a diversity of conceptions of the world of the dead. This is for the most part related to the great variety of texts that are grouped under this term (see chapter 2). An investigation of the mythical poems demonstrates that the dead who die peacefully go to the realm of the dead called Hel (e.g. see *Baldrs draumar* in Eddukvæði 1954, 465-69, also discussed in chapter 2). From Grímnismál in *Eddukvæði* (1954, 86, stanza 8) and Gylfaginning in *Edda Snorra* (1954, 55-60) we learn that men slain in battle go to *Valhöll*. Nevertheless, Gylfaginning (in *Edda Snorra* 1954, 41) also states that the dead are shared between Óðinn and the goddess Freya. In the poem, "Hárbarðsljóð", belonging to *Eddukvæði*, it is written that Þór receives dead slaves at his home, Þrúðvangar, while Óðinn gets the masters, after their deaths (in *Eddukvæði* 121, stanzas 24 and 25).[1] The previously mentioned examples from Þorsteins þætti Uxafóts (1991, 354) and Landnámabók (in *ÍF*, I, 1, 1968, 105) show that the dead are supposed to continue their lives in burial mounds (cf. Storm 1893, 199). Additionally, Jan de Vries suggests that the *álfar*, mentioned

1 In my opinion, this one reference should not be taken as cosmological evidence, but rather as a way of emphasizing the unequal relation between Óðinn and Þór, which this poem, in a lively and humorous manner, unfolds as a dialogue between the two gods.

in Eddukvæði, belong to a dead cult (de Vries 1956, I, 257-60; cf. Storm 1893, 199).

As Terry Gunnell has mentioned (2007), many scholars have been preoccupied with the idea that there was one Germanic religion, a conception generating structuralistic inspired studies which attempt to logically position all gods, goddesses, deities, and other beings and places appearing in the Old Norse literature, within a single, all-encompassing cosmology. Apart from the question of whether an inherently logically organised cosmology existed in Northern Europe, the texts, so varied in style and authority, cannot provide sufficient support for such attempts. Gunnell writes:

> The range of conflicting myths that must have been in existence within the wonderful multicultural gathering of peoples that settled in Iceland in the late ninth century is particularly evident in Snorri's desperate attempts to construct one image of Nordic cosmology in the *Prose Edda*, and in the words of the Icelandic editor of the Sigurðr poems in the *Codex Regius* as he attempts to explain how Sigurðr died (*Frá dauða Sigurðar*). Written history wants facts. The oral culture, on the other hand, is and has always been happy with variation which is the name of the game in folkloristics. (Gunnell 2007, 114)

There are, however, a few prevailing themes which appear throughout the literature. As I wrote in chapter 3, the dead are most often conceptualised as bodily entities, which de Vries describes as "seelenlosen Körper in 'vergeistigtem' Zustande" (de Vries 1956, I, 228-29). Illustrative of this conception of the dead is the practice, when a person has died, of moving the corpse out of the house by breaking down a wall instead of carrying the body through the door. This was probably done in order to prevent the dead from being able to find their way home again. Afterwards, the wall was rebuilt (see e.g. Egils Saga in *ÍF*, II, 1933, 174-75 and Eyrbyggja Saga in *ÍF*, IV, 1935, 92). The Old Norse literature also demonstrates that some dead "*láu eigi kyrr*" ("did not lay still") in their graves. In these cases, it was necessary to fatally wound them again. For example, in "Gréttis Saga" it is written that Gréttir hews off the head of Glámur, who then wanders around, causing death and destruction among the living. Glámur, "sem lá eigi kyrr", must be killed again, before he finally leaves the living alone (Gréttis saga Ásmundarsonar in *ÍF*, VII, 1936, 113, 122). Another sign that the dead are supposed to keep their orginal characteristics are examples in which they complain about the conditions of their graves. In *Landnámabók* it is written that the deceased. Ásmundur complains from his burial mound that he has been buried with a slave; the slave is removed (Landnámabók in *ÍF*, I, 1, 1968, 105).

The folk tales show some continuity in the conceptualisation of the dead as bodily entities. Typical of the folktales is the wrestling with draugar. The fol-

lowing folk tale, called "Skemmtilegt er myrkrið" ("Isn't it Fun in the Dark"), is an example of this:

> Í fyrndinni og allt til vorra daga var það landssiður að vaka yfir líkum og var það oftast gjört við ljós ef nótt var eigi albjört. Einu sinni dó galdramaður nokkur, forn í skapi og illur viðfangs. Vildu fáir verða til að vaka yfir líki hans. Þó fékkst maður til þess sem var hraustmenni mikið og fullhugi að því skapi. Fórst honum vel að vaka. Nóttina áður en átti að kistuleggja slokknaði ljósið litlu fyrr en dagur kom upp. Reis þá líkið upp og mælti: "Skemmtilegt er myrkrið." Vökumaður svaraði: "Þess nýtur þú ekki." Kvað hann þá vísu þessa:
> "Alskínandi er nú fold,
> Út er runnin gríma.
> Það var kerti, en þú ert mold,
> Og þegiðu einhvern tíma."
>
> Síðan hljóp hann ofan á líkið og braut það á bak aftur. Var það síðan kyrrt það sem eftir var nætur. (Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri, I, 1954-1961, 226-27)
>
> [In the old days, and right into the nineteenth century, it was customary for someone to keep watch beside a corpse, and this was generally done with a light burning, unless the night was very bright. Once, a certain magician died; his mind had been full of the old heathen ways, and he had been an unpleasant person to deal with, so there were not many people willing to come and keep watch by his body. However, one man was found to do the job; he was a very strong man, with a fearless heart. His vigil went well.
> On the last night before the body was to be put in its coffin, the light went out a little before dawn broke. Then the body sat up and said: "Isn't it fun in the dark!" The watcher replied: "You won't gain much out of it!" and then recited this verse:
> All the earth is shining now,
> Night has fled away;
> The candle's out, but dust art thou —
> Be silent for today!
> Then he flung himself on the corpse and forced it down on its back, and it stayed quiet for the rest of the night. (Simpson 1972, 106-107)]

These examples are illustrations of efforts to keep the dead from returning to the living. However, many examples can be found in which the dead communicate (often in a dream) a strong wish that their name remains among the living. In "Vatnsdæla saga", for example, the son of Ingimundur, Earl of Gotland, asks his murderer to ensure that his name will not vanish (Vatnsdæla saga 1939, 10).

Other evidence is found in "Þorsteins þætti Uxafóts". In this story, Brynjar, who is buried in a burial mound, appears in a dream dreamt by the main figure of the saga, Þorsteinn. After Þorsteinn has helped Brynjar kill his enemies in the dream, Brynjar awards Þorsteinn, and says to him: "Nú þætti mér miklu máli skipta að þú kæmir nafni mínu undir skírn ef þér yrði það auðið að eiga son." ("It is very important to me that you baptize your child with my name, if you should be so lucky as to receive a son." m.t.) (Þorsteins þætti Uxafóts 1991, 354). Gustav Storm interprets this wish of Brynjar's as evidence of the existence of a belief in rebirth in early Iceland. It is against this background that he considers the main theme of the story as being the transition from pre-Christian to Christian belief: In passing on his name, Brynjar would be literally reborn as a Christian, and gain access to eternal life (Storm 1893, 203). Other scholars have similarly argued that the Old Norse sources demonstrate that naming involves a transfer of the spirit or "substance" of the dead (consisting of personal qualities and characteristics) to newborn children (Molenaar 1982, 48; Turville-Petre 1964, 194-95; Eiríksson 1992, 95).

Storm (1893) has found evidence that the practice of naming children after dead relatives still persisted in later times in the Nordic countries, especially through the appearance of the dead in dreams, which is similar to the above-mentioned example from Þorsteins þætti Uxafóts. He finds evidence of this in the work of Eilert Sundt (1859, VIII, 17), Olaus Nicolaisen (1889), and Hans Ström (1762-1766). Hans Ström, for example, writes in his book *Physisk og oeconomisk Beskrivelse over Fogderiet Søndmør, beliggende i Bergens Stift, i Norge* ("A Physical and Economic Description of the District of Søndmør, situated in the Diocese of Bergen, Norway") of 1762-1766:

> At opkalde den Mands eller Kvindes Person, som forekommer Moderen I Drømme, medens hun gaaer frugtsommelig, er blant Bonderne meget brugeligt; og i Fald saadant skulle forekommes, bilder man sig ind, at Barnet kom til at vantrives. Den i Drømme forekommende Person siges at gaae efter Navne; og skulle Moderen end drømme om en Mands Person, men føde et Pigebarn, saa maa dog hans Navn beholdes, og, paa hvad Maade skee kan, forandres til et Kvinde Navn. (Ström 1762-1766, 535)

> [To name a child after the man or woman who appears to the mother in a dream while she is pregnant is very common among the farmers; and should this be refused, people believe that this will be disadvantageous to the child. It is said that the person who appears in the dream, 'goes for the name': and when the mother dreams about a man, but gives birth to a daughter, his name should nevertheless be kept, and, in whatever way, be changed into a female name. (m.t.)]

Also the Icelandic folk tales show evidence of the idea that the transfer of a name involves the transfer of "substance". In one folk tale found in the collection of Jón Árnason, it is the devil himself who appears in a dream to pass his name on to a child. Even though the priest refuses to name the child Satan, and chooses Natan instead, the child has several devilish characteristics, and later becomes an infamous murderer (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri*, II, 1954-1961, 25-26).[2] A tale found in the collection of Sigfús Sigfússon is another example. The tale, recorded in the first half of the nineteenth century, is the personal story of Ásbjörn, son of Stefán Ásbjörnsson. Stefán drowned when Ásbjörn and his brother were only boys. Their mother remarried a man named Guðmundur. Stefán, who had died, appeared in a dream of Guðmundur's and said: "Komdu Páll!" (Come to me Páll) Guðmundur knew right away what Stefán meant. Stefán was seeking his son Páll, and Páll would thus die in waking life. Guðmundur, who loved Páll more than Ásbjörn, said: "No, don't take Páll away from me, can't you take Asbjörn instead?" It seemed to him that Stefán answered: "No, Ásbjörn needs to keep my name." Shortly after, Páll drowned. When Ásbjörn became an adult, he married Bóel. They had a daughter. Ásbjörn doubted whether he should name her after his father. Then his father came to him in a dream and said: "My name brings fortune". Therefore, the girl was named Stefanía. Then Ásbjörn dreamt that he was on a trip to cut ice. It seemed to him that an evil spirit chased him, caught him, threw himself on top of him, and put a knife in his side, while saying: "This wound is not deadly. You will pay for this later". Shortly after, Stefanía died. Then Ásbjörn and Bóel had a son. The day before his baptism, Ásbjörn again had his doubts about the name, and it again seemed that his father appeared, and said brusquely: "My name brings fortune". Subsequently, the boy received the name Stefán, and, as the dream man predicted, his life turned our fortunately (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og sagnir* 1922-25, I, 28-29).

Several aspects of this folk tale are worth mentioning: First, the deceased father's strong wish to keep his name (and spirit) among the living, offering fortune to the child, which only comes true the second time. Secondly, the convincing power of the dead. As we also see in other cases, the living only rarely refuse the wishes of the dead. Thirdly, the dead seek the living, in order to take them to the world of the dead.

In present-day Iceland, there is striking and extensive ethnographic evidence that the practice of naming children in accordance with the wishes of the deceased who appear in dreams is still very strong. The survey mentioned in the

---

2 Names also play a significant role as dream symbols. Some names predict problems, while others are interpreted as indicating good fortune. The name Sigríður, for example, is considered a positive sign for the future; the word *sigur* means victory. In 1996, a dream interpretation book with the title *Hvern dreymdi þig?* ("About whom did you dream?"), written by Símon Jón Jóhannsson was published. This book consists solely of a list of names and their meanings.

introduction, *Könnun á íslenskri þjóðtrú og trúarviðhorfum* (Arnaldsdóttir et al. 2007), demonstrates that fourteen percent of 391 female respondents, and three percent of 265 male respondents had had the experience of a deceased person seeking a namesake in a dream. Seventy-five percent of 617 respondents state that it is possible that names are transferred this way. Thus, even though the dead no longer appear as bodily entities, but rather as a spirit, and the dead are no longer believed to be responsible for the deaths of others, they still wish their names to remain among the living. In the following section, I will present the way in which this theme unfolds in everyday life in contemporary Icelandic society.

The caring dead

According to many Icelanders, dreams may announce someone's impending death. Dreaming that a loved one is going to die, and the subsequent reflections upon awakening, cause much harm and distress. But such dreams (or succeeding dreams) might also include elements of care and comfort. The dream might show that dead relatives may return to the world of the living to seek and assist those who are going to die. The dead, then, guide the dying to "the other side", the realm of the dead, and comfort both them and their living relatives by showing how well they will be received among their dead relatives. Dream accounts of dying, so often expressed in Euro-American literature and scholarship as the ultimate expression of the withdrawal of the self from the world, is, in present day Iceland, an expression of social life, of caring and relating. The following dream account of a woman from Reykjavík illustrates this, and contrasts sharply with the dream accounts found in the earlier literature, wherein the dead cause harm, death, and destruction when they wandered among the living.

> And I dreamt about Magnús, my brother. I was pregnant with my first child, and I was home, at my mother's, [I] lived there. [I] dreamt at night, one night, it seemed to me he came to me and said: "Yes, I am your brother." I found him a very beautiful man, very much like my father, so I knew it was true.[3] Then he says: "Now I want to take you with me and show . . . you something." I didn't say anything. It seemed to me that I just followed along with him, and so it seemed to me [that I] climbed up a long ladder,[4] and he said: "I am planning to take your little girl with me, when she has died." It seemed to me that I had given birth to a little girl. He said: I want to show you where we are going to live, your little girl and I. I found it so natural that he

3 She had never met her brother while he was alive.

4 Bernadine McCreesh points out in her article, "Prophetic Dreams and Visions" (2005), that a ladder leading to heaven is a common feature of Judeo-Christian literature; its first manifestation is found in Gen. 28:12 (McCreesh 2005, 258).

should take care of her and I go up with him, and it seemed to me that we are walking up over such a very beautiful lawn, such a grass lawn and then, there were such strange herbs, everything was so strange there, as one knows [it is] in dreams.
I just followed him further. He holds me under my arm and also holds the child. It seems to me that we are on our way to a house. It seems that he says to me: "Yes, mother, why isn't she home now?" [About waking life:] She was dead then. No, she wasn't yet dead. "She is not home, she is not supposed to come right away," he said. "She doesn't come now," that he said to me. He opens the house and says: "You wait outside." I don't know what I answered. He just walks in and I look into the house, although I was outside. It was as if I saw the house from the inside. And it was so beautiful. Everything was so bright, and everything was different to how a house usually is. And it seemed to me that it was possible to move the walls. They weren't solid walls. They were such that the people walked, floated, went away from the walls. And it seemed to me that there were people who I didn't know. And at the same time it was as if I knew them. The people were relatives, he said, those who were gathered together to welcome him and the child . . . It seemed to me that it was my girl he held. And he came back to me, and said something like: "Now I will follow you down," he said, "because your time hasn't come. Time hasn't come for you." Something like that, he said. And it seemed to me that he went down the ladder again, and me with him, and then I woke up.
A week later I got chicken-pox, and was sent to the South.[5] My nose was bleeding, and things like that, and I lost the child. He came just before I lost it, before I saw him, [before] I dreamt about him. My mother wasn't ready to go, so she didn't, she didn't die until 1964. He knew that. And they were preparing for her. [They] prepared for her arrival. (m.t.)

This story is a highly personal account of an Icelandic woman who tragically lost her unborn child, but it is also a typical Icelandic description of an encounter with the world of the dead in dreams. Many dream accounts of encounters between the living and the dead follow a distinctive narrative pattern. The linguistic marker "he came to me", in Icelandic, "hann kom til mín", is often used when a dreamer meets a dead person, non-human being, or half-human, such as *huldufólk*. I noticed the importance of this construction when a woman told me of a dream, without mentioning explicitly that it was a dream, and not a waking situation. The events that she had dreamt of were of such a nature that they

5 In this context, "sent to the South" means that she was sent to a hospital in Reykjavík.

could easily have happened in waking life. I tried to figure out how I knew it was a dream, and realised that this was because of the words: "hann kom til mín". This linguistic marker indicates that the initiative to establish contact between the living and the dead is taken by the latter. The construction "hann kom til mín" belongs to the first phase of the previously mentioned sequence of four: The dead visit dreamers in their own environment, mostly at their bedside. The dreamer might then be invited by the deceased person to follow along, and is led to another realm, as in the above-mentioned example, in which the world of the dead is reached by climbing a ladder. After the deceased person has shown the other sphere to the dreamer, the dreamer is made familiar with events to come. Then, she is led to her bed again, and awakens. This sequence, typical of engagement with other realms, is also linguistically marked in similar ways in dream accounts dealing with encounters between huldufólk and humans. The following examples from the folk tales illustrate this: "… að þau hjón voru nýháttuð; þótti konunni sem maður kæmi að rúmstokknum. Þessi maður biður hana koma fljótlega á fætur" [". . . when the couple had just gone to bed, it seemed to the woman that a man came at the bedside. This man asked her to get up quickly"] (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri*, I, 1954-1961, 17). "En er þeir eru sofnaðir dreymir Jón að kona kemur að honum mikil vexti og bláklædd. Hún biður hann upp standa og fara með sér" ["And when they fell asleep, Jón dreamt that a big woman in black clothes came to him. She asked him to get up, and to follow her"] (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri*, I, 1954-1961, 21).

A second linguistic marker, which is characteristic of dream accounts involving the dead, and also present in accounts of contact with huldufólk, is the use of the verb *þykja*, "to seem". Similar constructions, namely "visum est sibi" ("it seemed to him") or "videtur sibi videre" ("it seemed to him he had seen") are found in accounts of apparitions and visions in medieval Latin sources. They usually refer to an encounter between a passive dreamer and an active agent from an external sphere. Jean-Claude Schmitt interprets these evidential markers as expressions of doubt directed to the nature of the object seen or experienced. The person is first observed by the apparition, and can in his or her turn only vaguely perceive the being (Schmitt 1994, 26). The constructions "hann kom til mín" and "henni þótti" should similarly be seen as expressions of the asymmetrical relationship between the passive dreamer and the active agent belonging to other realms, such as a deceased person or a member of the huldufólk. This relation is clearly expressed in the above-mentioned dream account (cf. Kratschmer and Heijnen, 2010).

A third element that characterizes many dream accounts of contact with the dead addresses social rules concerning the crossing over from the sphere of the living to the sphere of the dead. Dreamers are allowed to enter the realm of the dead, which is often called *hinum megin* ("on the other side"), but are not supposed to move freely around. In the above example, when the woman is led to the realm of the dead by her deceased brother, her brother and her child are welcomed in a house full of relatives. The dreamer, however, has to stay outside,

and can only see from a distance what is going on. Dreamers often display detachment to both beings and objects they encounter in other spheres. If dreamers become too involved in the sphere of the dead, the dream, narrated in waking life, will be interpreted as a crossing over to hinum megin, "the other side". If, in the above-mentioned example, the group of dead relatives had welcomed the woman into their house, the dream would be seen as a sign of her own coming death.

A fourth characteristic of dream accounts dealing with the dead is the idea that people who die will be welcomed by, and live together with relatives and, sometimes, friends. As I indicated, dying literally implies a movement to the sphere hinum megin. In the example mentioned above, the brother of the dreamer says that the child who the dreamer is going to lose will receive a home hinum megin, amongst deceased relatives. These relatives are also preparing for the arrival of the dreamer's mother.

Evidence of this idea is also found in the Old Norse literature. In "Eyrbyggja saga", for example, it is written that the dead will live among their relatives in a mountain, called Helgafell, situated near the farm, where the dead had dwelt when still living:

> Þórólfr kallaði Þórsnes milli Vigrafjarðar ok Hofsvágs. Í því nesi stendr eitt fjall; á því fjalli hafði Þórólfr svá mikinn átrúnað, at þangat skyldi engi maðr óþveginn líta ok engu skyldi tortíma í fjallinu, hvárki fé né mönnum, nema sjálft gengi í brott. Þat fjall kallaði hann Helgafell ok trúði, at hann myndi þangat fara, þá er hann dæi, ok allir á nesinu hans frændr. (Eyrbyggjasaga 1935, 9)
>
> [Thorolf gave the name Thor's ness to the region between Vigra Fjord and Hofsvag. On this headland is a mountain held so sacred by Thorolf that no one was allowed even to look at it without first having washed himself, and no living creature on this mountain, neither man nor beast, was to be harmed until it left of its own accord. Thorolf called this mountain Helga Fell and believed that he and his kinsmen would go into it when they died.] (Eyrbyggjasaga 1989, 29)

When Þórólfur dies, his son has a son, who is called Þorsteinn þorskabítur. Þorsteinn takes over the farm of his father:

> Þat var eitt kveld um haustit, at sauðamaðr Þorsteins fór at fé fyrir norðan Helgafell; hann sá, at fjallit lauksk upp norðan; hann sá inn í fjallit elda stóra ok heyrði þangat mikinn glaum ok hornaskvöl; ok er hann hlýddi, ef hann næmi nökkur orðaskil heyrði hann, at þar var heilsat Þorsteini þorskabít ok förunautum hans ok mælt, at hann skal sitja í öndvegi gegnt feðr sínum. Þenna fyrirburð sagði sauðamaðu Þóru, konu Þorsteins, um kveldit; Hon lét sér fátt um finnask ok kal-

lar vera mega, at þetta væri fyrirboðan stærri tíðenda. Um morguninn eptir kómu menn útan ór Höskuldsey ok sögðu þau tíðendi, at Þorsteinn þorskabítr hafði drukknat í fiskiróðri, ok þótti mönnum þat mikill skaði (Eyrbyggjasaga 1935, 19).

[One evening in the autumn as Thorstein's shepherd was tending sheep north of Helga Fell, he saw the whole north side of the mountain opened up, with great fires burning inside it and the noise of feasting and clamour over the ale-horns. As he strained to catch particular words, he was able to make out that Thorstein was being invited to sit in the place of honour opposite to his father.

That evening the shepherd told Thorstein's wife Thora about this apparition. She was deeply disturbed by it and said it could be a foreboding of something very sinister. In the morning some men brought news from Hoskuld Island that Thorstein Cod-Biter had been drowned on a fishing trip. People thought it a bitter loss.]
(Eyrbyggja Saga 1989, 38)

An example from the second part of the twentieth century, derived from the ethnological collection of the National Museum of Iceland, goes as follows:

I have often dreamt about dead people. In general, they live in their own old houses and do their daily work, just as they did before. They are satisfied. Although the farms have been abandoned for a long time, in the dreams they are still the same as they were during the time the people lived there. When one dreams that a house has disappeared from a place where many people lived, the dream refers to the people of that house. Illness will come and, after that, death. (ÞÞ 07003 61, m.t.)

Thus, as also previous examples demonstrate, the idea has existed for many centuries that the dead continue to live, even though the manner in which they are thought to do varies from period to period.

The idea that the dead continue to live their lives establishes the possibility that they can return to the world of the living if they feel their presence is needed. At the beginning of the twentieth century, spiritualism entered Icelandic society, and the movement still has much influence (see my discussion in chapter 6). Together with an Icelandic friend, I went to a so-called *skyggnilýsingafundur*, a meeting where Skúli Lórenzson, a spiritual mediator, passed on messages from the dead to the living. The meeting was organised by *Sálarrannsóknarfélag Íslands* (The Spiritual Society of Iceland), and held in Reykjavík. The meeting started with a half hour of chitchat, while people dropped in, and Skúli was not yet present. When he entered the room, approximately thirty-five

persons of varying age, gender, and class, had taken seats, and extra chairs had been added. The room was decorated with candlelight, pictures of Jesus and saints, and paintings in pastel colours, easily recognizable as visual expressions of New Religious Movements. Skúli started off by asking us to recite the Lord's Prayer together. After we had all prayed, he quickly shifted tone, and said that the merrier and happier we were, the merrier and happier the dead would be. He created a positive, amicable atmosphere by telling a joke. After he had made us laugh several times, his message to us was that, if we wanted the dead to appear for us, we needed to invite them bodily: our knees should be positioned slightly apart, and our hands should rest on them with the palms of the hands turned up. After these preparations, the dead appeared immediately. Skúli could see them standing behind certain persons in the public. He passed on their messages to us in his own voice, keeping his identity. Many of the dead persisted in getting their message through, leading to a non-stop flow of words; guidelines, messages, remarks, and jokes, only interrupted by Skúli's own repeating question to the living person: "Do you know what is aimed at?" A woman's mother appeared, and was very persistent about the condition of her daughter's feet. The woman ended up removing a sock and shoe, and showing one foot to the public, evoking bursts of laughter. Other people had messages from the dead, who cared about their psychological and physical conditions, and informed them who to turn to for help with overcoming depression, or which exercises to perform to get rid of severe back pains. A woman was asked whether she intended to give her child the name of the deceased person who appeared. The woman answered that she did not know yet. Skúli mentioned that he perceived a light beam between two namesakes, a deceased and a living person, both of whom were present. Another woman was asked whether she wrote down her dreams. She answered: "Now and then", and was encouraged by the dead to do this more often. The message conveyed to her was that if she would pay more attention to her dreams, she would be in better contact with the dead.

Skúli talked and performed, moving back and forth in the aisle between the spectators. At one point, he directed himself to me, saying that he saw a woman standing behind me, my mother's mother. My grandmother talked through him to me about my many journeys between Denmark and Iceland, my mother's previous illness, two children who were near me, my own life, about my doubts which way to go in my life, and that in August, everything would take a turn to the better. The problems he revealed to people through the messages of the dead were personal, but universal. With the aid of humour and the caring dead, Skúli Lórenzson turned personal problems into social issues and cosmological statements, as we see in shamanistic practice, in which illness and problems are treated cosmologically and socially.

After the meeting, my friend and I went for a hot chocolate in one of Reykjavík's cafés, and talked the meeting over. Through the intervention of the dead, our conversation became much more personal than it had before, and I would guess that this also was the case for the others who had attended the meeting. As

I have observed at similar meetings, when the dead address themselves to a person, highlighting a certain problem within a group of attendants, the problem becomes, at least to some extent, the responsibility of the group, especially of relatives and friends who are present. For example, at a women's gathering, which I had attended a few years earlier, a *spákona* (seeress) helped a woman who was afraid of dying confront her anxiety. This spákona, who is also able to perceive the dead, saw many deceased persons standing around this woman, a sign that death was not so far away as she might have hoped. The message, though, was clear: the dead comforted her, assuring her that dying was perhaps not that scary, after all. The event established a caring circle around the woman: the dead, among whom she would live "on the other side", the spákona who evoked attention on both sides by revealing to the living what she could see and hear, and the attendants, especially those who were relatives or friends. Even though her close relatives were already familiar with her anxiety, the added attention evoked by the presence of the dead ensured that the topic was discussed again in a social and cosmological context, giving support to the woman, and perhaps, to some extent, resolution.

The dead may also concentrate on topics that address certain groups, or society as a whole. Particularly well-known Icelanders, for example, main figures of the sagas, may appear many centuries after their deaths, to comment on events in the living world. A famous example is the appearance of Ketill úr Mörk, a figure from *Njáls saga*, in a dream dreamt by Hermann Jónasson, who was a member of Iceland's parliament, the *Alþingi*, between 1900 and 1908. Ketill úr Mörk appeared because he wanted to end all speculation about how the remaining parts of Njáls saga should be combined, and how several events should be interpreted (Jónasson 1912).

The caring living

In many European societies, the appearance of the dead in a dream is seen as a creation of the dreamer's mind. Such a dream is often considered to be an expression of the mourning process, and to appear only for a limited period of time, when the dreamer is trying to accept that the person no longer is there. This way of experiencing grief is also recognised in Icelandic society, but the prevalent idea is that the dead appear in dreams because they have problems leaving the sphere of the living, or are provoked by the living. The dead will continue to appear in dreams until the living have found a solution to the dead person's problem. The frequent or unexpected appearance of the dead is generally interpreted as indicating an imbalance in the relationship between the living and the dead, or as a sign that the dead have a message for the living. When the dead do not appear, this is not a sign that they are not present, but rather that relationships between the living and the dead are in a normal state. Surveys that address the question of how many Icelanders have experienced the presence of a deceased person (see e.g., Hagvangur 1984 and Haraldsson 1988-1989, 103) are

therefore not always representative of how many Icelanders *believe* that contact with the dead is possible.

Some Icelanders told me that persons who die feel displaced for a certain period, until they have found their place hinum megin. This is especially thought to be the case when their death was unexpected. A member of a so-called *bænahringur* (a group of people who help both the living and the dead through prayer) mentioned to me as an example people who have committed suicide. According to him, these people do not meet the expected "big nothing", but find their lives just beginning. He said that this is the reason that the participants of the circle help these deceased people through prayer. Often, a *skyggn* person is present at the meetings of the "praying circle", serving as a mediator between the living and the dead, and asking those on "the other side" who have been dead for a longer time to help those who have died only recently. A skyggn woman told me of another example in which prayer was used to assist the dead to leave the world of the living behind, and find their place "on the other side":

> I often noticed knocking on the window and on the wall. Then, one night, I felt something on top of me, and I couldn't breathe. Then I woke up, and it occurred to me that someone is here, a draugur [a dead person who returns to the living] or someone. And I called my dad[6], and asked him to see what is going on. He did so the same night, or the night after.
> Me: Did he come here?
> Woman: No, he did it at home. Then he saw an old man, and said that he is completely sure that it was him. There was tremendous grief, and he didn't manage to move away. And since then, I haven't heard knocking on the wall, I haven't seen him since.
> Me: And how does your father do this?
> Woman: He asks whether someone is there. Then it is shown to him. And he sees the man and sees what he is doing and what the matter is. Then he prays for him, asks him to go further, to move on. And normally it goes the way he asks. (m.t.)

The feeling that the dreamer is suffocating because something heavy is lying on the dreamer's body is a common theme of dream accounts, both in present-day Iceland and in the older sources. The folk tales show how nightmares were thought to be physical conditions caused by a deceased person who is in great distress, and seeks the living dreamer. The folk tales reveal a personification of the nightmare, the Mara (see e.g. *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og sagnir*, III, 1922-1925, 237-39).[7] In a similar way to *fylgjur*, who cause strong feelings of drowsiness,

6 Her father is a spiritual healer, living in Reykjavík.

7 This supports Henzen's thesis that an etymological relationship is to be found between *draugur* and *draumur*.

the Mara, while lying on top of the sleeper, paralyses the sleeper, who awakens because of this, in great distress. Reciting Christian prayers, or summoning God or Jesus are, according to the folk tales and in contemporary life, important acts to smooth contact between the living and the dead, to restore disturbed relations between the two groups, and to protect the living from the danger involved in their engagement with the dead.

Christianity and "folk religion" have been integrated for many centuries. In chapter 2, I wrote that the establishment of the Catholic Church's institutional power in Iceland was a long process. Under the influence of the Danish Crown, with the Reformation, Lutheranism became the official religion in Iceland. The transition from Catholicism to Lutheranism involved a major change, in that the latter morally justified worldly activity. This strong focus on mundane affairs positioned the visible institutional church within the earthly realm, while the clergy turned into a secular, rather than a divine group. Additionally, Lutheranism is characterised by relatively freedom for the individual to define his or her personal relation with God and a strong focus on life here and now, rather than life after death. These characteristics in combination with the crucial importance of the relationship between the living and the dead in Icelandic cosmology, turned "folk religion" into an important complementary belief to Lutheranism. At the beginning of the twentieth century, spiritualism gained a strong foothold in Iceland, and promoted the integration of the Church, folk religion, and science (see my discussion in chapter 7). In present-day Iceland, eighty-one percent of the population are members of the Icelandic state church, the Lutheran Church. Transition rites, such as baptisms, marriages, and funerals are almost always performed within the institutional framework of the Lutheran church, but the church as institution has, during the past decade, increasingly distanced itself from engagements with the world of the dead. Still, in everyday life, prayer and the application of Christian symbols and rituals plays an important role in the involvement in the sphere of the dead during waking experience. I would even suggest that Christian symbols and rituals in Iceland should be seen as magical acts, rather than expressions of Christian devotion.

Thus, prayer may assist the departed even in present-day Iceland, to cross over from the sphere of the living to the sphere of the dead, a process which may be problematic. Dreaming is an important means for the living to determine whether the newly dead need help and guidance in their repositioning. My research material, and the answers on questionnaire number four, question number 23 u[8], show that if a person who has recently died complains, it is almost always through the medium of dreaming. The dead appear in the dreams of relatives or others to whom they were close, or of someone who is *næmur* (sensitive

8 Question 23u of questionnaire number four is as follows: *Þekkja menn deili þess að hinn framliðni hafi kvartað ef einhverju fór aflaga með gröf hans?* ("Do you know of a deceased person who complained because someone had damaged or disarranged the grave?")

to signs from other spheres). An inhabitant of Hrunamannahreppur told me the following:

> Shortly after moving to this house, I dreamt about the man in whose house I once stayed, in the countryside.[9] He died some years ago. And I dreamt about him again and again and again, night after night. I was afraid to fall asleep. Then I decided: I needed to do something. I decided to look for his brother. I knew he had a brother. But I didn't know whether his brother was dead or alive. I looked him up in the telephone book. I could remember his name. I just called him when I had found him. I asked the man: "What is going on with your brother?" Then he told me that they have torn down the old house which the man owned, taken out all the old stuff, and removed the stable and sheep house, and destroyed everything where he had lived. And I told him that I have dreamt about him, and that the man felt so bad. . . . I asked if I was allowed to go there. He said: "Yes, yes, you may visit the place." And that I did, and my sister went along. We saw that all was in ruins, not the way he would have liked it to be. And [I] contacted Þorður í Skógum, . . . let him know that there are old memories and old books in refuse sacks. After that I didn't dream about him anymore. [I] stopped dreaming.
> Me: So you put the affair in order?
> Woman: I put the affair in order. He asked me for help, you know. He clearly got in contact with me, and I did what I could, and then I stopped dreaming. . . . I spent two summers in the countryside in his house. He was a very kind man. (m.t.)

Disrespect for the former belongings of the dead can be one reason that the dead might contact the living. In this example, the woman gave the deceased man a place in living society by contacting Þórður Tómasson í Skógum, curator of a local museum in Iceland. The remains of the man's life were reintegrated into society by becoming part of the collection of this local museum, allowing the man to find peace "on the other side".

The dead who are supposed to live on in their graves often ask for more practical assistance than the dead who are thought to approach the living from hinum megin. As in the example of the horse who appeared in a dream to complain about his cold feet (see chapter 3), deceased humans are also said to sometimes complain about feeling cold whenever the soil is not sufficiently covering their corpse or their grave. An example of this comes from a response to questionnaire number sixty-one of the National Museum of Iceland: One winter night in the 1950s, a man dreamt that his grandson, who just had died in waking

9 Until approximately the 1990s, it was common for children to spend their long summer holidays at the farms of their relatives, where they helped with the daily work.

life, sat on his knee and pressed himself against his breast. The boy said: "I am cold, grandpa." When the man woke, he found the earth frozen. He went out, took soil from a flowerbed, brought it to the churchyard, and spread it out over his grandson's grave (ÞÞ 07069 61). In this particular case, no information is provided on what happens next, but normally such an action would be seen as solving the problem. The deceased grandson will stop appearing in the dreams of his grandfather, as did the old man whose belongings became part of the collection of the local museum.

In other cases, the dead whose problems are solved may communicate this to the living, by appearing for a last time in a dream showing happiness and joy. Such a positive dream is also, in general, interpreted as a sign that the deceased person has found his or her place hinum megin, without necessarily having appeared to the living previously. One of my main informants e-mailed me, after I had returned from fieldwork, the following dream she had dreamt:

> And I was waiting for Kristín [Referring to waking life:] (my mother's sister who died a long time ago). I knew she would come, and I very much looked forward to that. Then she came, and we hugged and kissed. It was very nice to see her, and I told her so, and then I said that she looked so well, strong and healthy. [Referring to waking life:] (She had become very thin when she died from cancer . . .). And she said that she felt so well hinum megin . . . . It is my experience that when one dreams about deceased people whom one knows very well, and does not dream about for many years, there is some kind of message. (m.t.)

The length of time it takes for the dead to establish themselves hinum megin is thought to depend on themselves, on the behaviour of the living, and sometimes on the help which is offered by other, often related, dead persons. It can vary from several weeks to many years, and some of the dead never appear in a dream. The establishment of the dead hinum megin does not mean that they will never again return to the sphere of the living. Certain actions or events in the sphere of the living can make the dead, who have found their place hinum megin, appear again, even after a considerable period of time. The dead may be upset by the behaviour of the living or have certain messages for them, either to ensure that they are remembered in the right way, or to express care for the living and help them with difficulties in their lives.

All the above examples show that life in the living world is supervised by the dead, and that the actions of the living influence the well-being of the dead. So far I have discussed the nature of relationships between the living and the dead; I will now turn to a detailed analysis of the exchange between the living and the dead, namely of the circulation of names. The establishment of the dead hinum megin, done through a reintegration of the remains of the dead into living society, is central to Icelandic conceptions of the person.

> Ingólfsfjall: Tvennt ferst í Snjóflóði:
> Tvö ungmenni fórust á sviplegan hátt á Ingólfsfjalli er þau lentu í snjóflóði í gili í miðjum hliðum fjallsins skammt frá gömlu vegamótunum beint ofan við Selfoss. Að sögn björgunarsveitamanna eru snjóflóð í Ingólfsfjalli mjög fátíð og mundu þeir ekki eftir flóðum í fjallinu á þessari öld.
> Ungmennin, sem fórust, voru Sigrún Ágústsdóttir frá Birtingaholti and Bogi Pétur Thorarensen [. . . frá] Eyrarbakki. Þau höfðu búið saman í tvö ár og stunduðu nám í Reykjavík. Tildrög slyssins voru þau að ungmennin höfðu farið um klukkan 14. á bil frá Selfossi að fjallinu og hugðust þau ganga um það. Þeirra var síðan saknað er fór að líða daginn og var þá farið að svipast um eftir bílnum fundust ungmennin fljótlega í miðri skriðunni þau hefðu látizt samstundis. (Ingólfsfjall: Tvennt ferst í Snjóflóði. Morgunblaðið, February 2, 1982)
>
> [The mountain of Ingólfsfjall: Two young people died suddenly on the mountain of Ingólfsfjall, when an avalanche hit them . . . in a ravine in the middle of the mountain near the old crossroad, opposite Selfoss. . . . According to the rescue workers, avalanches occur only very rarely on Ingólfsfjall. They cannot recall one in this century. The young people who died [...] had lived together for two years and studied in Reykjavík. The accident happened after the young people had departed at 2 pm by car from Selfoss to the mountain, with the intention of going for a walk. When the day passed by, they were missed, and a search for their car was initiated . . . the young people were quickly found in the middle of the avalanche. . . . they had died instantly. (m.t.)]

In the summer of 2000, I conducted fieldwork while working in a greenhouse in Hrunamannahreppur, picking and packing tomatoes. Most of the time, I worked together with three Icelandic women: Lára, Helga and Ása.[10] One day we talked about baptizing children. I told the other women that I found it interesting that Icelandic children first receive a name when they are baptised. In the Netherlands, where I am raised, children are named as soon as they are born. I was wondering how they addressed the children during the period before they receive a name. They told me that it was common to use the word *litli*, "little [boy]" or *litla*, "little [girl]". The women said that they first want to see how the newborn child behaves and what it looks like. Only then do they decide whether

10 I am using the names of the people involved with their permission; Helga Karlsdóttir has read and approved this chapter.

the name they have in mind fits the child or not. Lára said that the name she and her husband wanted to give their daughter was not appropriate. Therefore, they chose another name. Ása told me that a new law had been passed, stipulating that children must receive a name no later than six months after their birth, because it sometimes took parents so long before they decided on a name.

Helga mentioned that she had named her eldest daughter Sigrún, after a classmate from high school, because she had dreamt about this girl while she was pregnant. This classmate went for a walk on Ingólfsfjall, together with her boyfriend, and, as the above newspaper article describes, they tragically lost their lives in an avalanche. Sigrún started to appear in Helga's dreams shortly after her death, but the dreams became more frequent when Helga was pregnant with her eldest daughter. When Helga told me some of these dreams in which Sigrún appeared, she used the construction discussed earlier: "Sigrún kom til mín" ("Sigrún came to me"), indicating that it was the deceased girl who took the initiative to communicate through the dream, and not Helga herself. Having dreamt about Sigrún for the first time during her pregnancy, Helga told the dream to her mother, who was convinced that Sigrún wanted to pass her name on to Helga's coming child. Helga and her husband were, nevertheless, not sure as to whether this was indeed the dead girl's intention. But because Sigrún kept on appearing in Helga's dreams, the newborn child received her name. After the naming of their daughter, Helga dreamt again about the deceased Sigrún. Helga saw the head of Sigrún in the dream, and she was singing. Helga explains this joyful dream as a sign that they were right to name their daughter after Sigrún. The deceased Sigrún stopped appearing for a while in Helga's dreams, and Helga sees this as a further confirmation that Sigrún indeed wanted to pass on her name to their daughter.

Helga told me that Sigrún is her *draumkona* ("dream woman"). This means that Sigrún appears in Helga's dreams now and then to give her advice or information. This is the reason that Sigrún only disappeared for a short time after her name was passed on. When Helga was pregnant with her second daughter, Sigrún again came to her in a dream. At that time, in her waking life, Helga was reading a book in which one page was missing. In the dream, Sigrún told her not to be upset about it. She would help her, and told her the missing page number. When Helga woke up she looked up the page that Sigrún had mentioned to her. The page dealt with giving birth. Helga saw this as a sign that Sigrún would help her with the delivery of her baby, and she had a rather easy delivery.

The appearance of a deceased person in one or more dreams dreamt by a pregnant woman, or by her husband, relatives, or friends, is interpreted by many Icelanders as the wish of a deceased person to pass on his or her name to the unborn child. In Icelandic, this practice is called *að vitja nafns* which means "to seek a name". Að vitja can also mean to visit or to find. The practice of að vitja nafns can cross-cut gender categories. Even though the appearance of a deceased woman is sometimes seen as a sign that the child will be a girl and

should a deceased man appear, that a boy might be expected, it is common for the names of the dead to be slightly changed to fit the gender of the child.

When I first learned about this practice, I assumed that the dead who appeared in dreams to pass on their names were relatives. Even though the survey, *Könnun á íslenskri þjóðtrú og trúarviðhorfum*, shows that many departed who appear in dreams are indeed closely related to the dreamer (Arnaldsdóttir et al. 2007), this is not a rule. The dead who appear in dreams can be deceased friends, acquaintances, or huldufólk or álfar. I was even told that a boy had received the name Gabriel, because the archangel Gabriel appeared in his mother's dreams while she was pregnant with him. Sigrún, who appeared in Helga's dreams, is distantly related to Helga, but Helga referred to her as her former classmate. Other examples which I came across were a girl who had received the name of a deceased acquaintance of her mother, and a boy who had received the name of a distant relative, a drowned sailor, because his grandfather had dreamt about this man when his daughter was pregnant. The latter example illustrates that the dead not only appear in the dreams of pregnant women (although this is most common) but in the dreams of their relatives as well. In the collection of answers on questionnaire number ten, I came across an example where the same deceased person appeared in the dreams of several members of a household:

> . . . when my mother was pregnant with my youngest sister, both my parents dreamt more than once about the same woman. Other members of the household also dreamt about her. Of course, the people thought it natural to choose her name, guided by [these dreams]. (ÞÞ 1004 10, m.t.)

When Icelanders tell of a child who has received a name because of að vitja nafns, they do not often elaborate on the specific content of the dream. I needed to ask explicitly about what, exactly, they had dreamt. A common theme was that the deceased person moved into the house of the pregnant woman. A woman from Reykjavík told me of the following example:

> Woman: She [the woman's mother], yes she came to me in a dream. [She] said that she had moved all her luggage, bags and stuff, and I don't know what more. She had moved into my place. And I was just pregnant . . . Therefore I knew that I would give birth to a girl.
> Me: So that's why she [the woman's daughter] carries the same name?
> Woman: Yes, yes, hún vitjaði nafns.[11] This happens so often. (m.t.)[12]

11 *Hún vitjaði nafns* means: "She [the woman's deceased mother] sought a namesake".

The practice of að vitja nafns is not simply an expression of a wish of the dead to pass on their names. The living are not completely free in their choice to accept or reject the name offered. When people refuse, it is believed that they expose their child to danger, as we also saw in the older sources (Ström 1762-1766, 535). A young woman told me, for example, why her grandmother was asthmatic:

> When my great-grandmother . . . was pregnant with my grandmother, a woman of the álfar came to her in a dream, and told her what she [the child] should be called. She had to give her the name Aagot Aníta, after the *álf* woman. But when my great-grandmother gave birth to my grandmother, and wanted to baptize her with this name, the pastor didn't accept the name Aagot, he simply rejected it. When the woman of the álfar appeared in the dream, she had said that if she [the dreamer] would not give her child this name, she would cast a spell. She was called Aníta [not Aagot], my grandmother, and my grandmother became asthmatic. She was very severely asthmatic, and died because of that at an age of just over sixty. And when my grandmother was pregnant with my mother, this same woman of the álfar came to her, and told her the same thing . . . . And my mother received this name [Aagot Aníta] and everything is alright with her. And I gave my daughter the name Aníta, after my mother. And so, perhaps it has nothing do with this, but listen, a woman looked into the future for me. And at the bottom of the cup, there was . . . a child, and she said to me: "Next time you are pregnant you will dream about a man, and he wants . . . the child to be named after him." I found it a bit scary, to know of this, you know, if one will understand it in the right way, if one dreams of the right man. She couldn't tell me if he was dead or alive.
> Me: So now you are somewhat anxious?
> Woman: Yes, with the next child. Perhaps I should not focus too much on it, but it was a message meant for me. (m.t.)

The woman is anxious, because dream images, which are thought to indicate að vitja nafns, are not always unambiguous. Several men might appear in this woman's dreams while she is pregnant. Also, the question of whether the man is dead or alive is significant. If he is alive, refusing him will not have so many consequences, but if he is dead and his wish is not followed, he will be able to hurt her child. The distinction made here between the living and the dead runs parallel to that made by some Icelanders between naming a child after a living

12 Other examples of dreams in which this theme appears are: ÞÞ 5621 10, ÞÞ 1004 10 and Agnarsson (1986, 73-74).

person, and the passing on of a name of a deceased person. In the first case, the expression "að skíra í höfuðið á einhverjum" (literally, "to baptize in the head of somebody") is used; in the latter, the expressions: "að skíra eftir honum/henni" ("to baptize after him/her"), or "að skíra nafni hans/hennar" (literally, "to baptize his/her name") are common. When a child has received the name of a well-known or respected person, and the child does not live up to the expectations associated with the name, Icelanders may use the expression "barnið kafnar undir nafni" (see e.g. ÞÞ 06618 10 and ÞÞ 5621 10). "Barnið" means "the child" and "kafna" "not able to breathe" or "to suffocate". In other words: the child is not strong enough to carry the name.

The above-discussed examples reflect the ideas that, ideally, a name and a person should fit together, and that people who have recently died want to keep their names in the sphere of the living. Sometimes, these two notions conflict. My partner and I visited a couple one week before the baptism of their son. He asked them whether they already had decided upon a name for their boy. The woman, confronted with the difficulty that, if they had decided upon a name, she would not have told us, answered by saying: "not really." I asked her whether she perhaps had dreamt about a deceased person wishing to pass on his or her name. She immediately burst out: "Good heavens no, and I keep my fingers crossed that no one appears in my dreams before our son is baptised." She explained her outburst, and said that in her husband's family a disagreeable person had twice appeared in the dreams of a pregnant woman, which meant that two men in the family had been given his name, and she was concerned that this man would also show himself in her dreams.

The examples above demonstrate that a name is not only a way of identifying an individual, but, as similarly demonstrated in the older sources, is supposed to carry with it certain characteristics or qualities. Namesakes are sometimes thought to share aspects of their personality. In 2006, I visited a woman who told me that her daughter had received the name of a friend of hers who had died of a severe illness. This friend had appeared several times in her dreams while she was pregnant.When she had told me this story, she called her daughter. The girl came in. She had nice long red hair. Her mother put her arms around her, and she said to me: "She resembles my friend. They have the same hair and the same lively personality." A friend of mine told me of another example, which illustrates that namesakes are regarded as sharing characteristics. One of her sisters has the same name as the ex-wife of their grandfather, with the result that their grandfather avoided contact with her, while he was close to my friend and her other sisters. After having read one of my articles on að vitja nafns (Heijnen 2007, 2010), she said to me that she suddenly understood why he behaved this way.

Naming by the living

When we compare naming through dreams with Icelandic naming practices where dreams are not involved, an interesting contrast appears. In Iceland,

Naming is subject to clear rules. The homepage of The Icelandic Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs contains lists with legal names for men and women.[13] A special committee called *Mannanafnanefnd* decides which names can be added to these lists. The rules, which the committee applies, are based on Icelandic rules of grammar and spelling, but the presence of certain names in the bible and sagas is significant, too. When a child is given a name by baptism, as is most common, the pastor or leader of another accepted religious group should, according to the law, refuse a name when it is not on the list of legal Icelandic names (*Lög um mannanöfn* 1996 nr. 45 8. gr).[14] The pastor who, in the above-mentioned example, refused to name the girl Aagot in accordance to the wish of a woman of the álfar simply followed the rules. Nowadays, both Aagot and Aníta are on the list of legal female names.

A few Icelandic families have permission to use a family name (*ættarnafn*) as a last name, but the dominant naming system is patronymic. Children's last names derive from the genitive form of their father's first name with the additional suffix *-son* ("son") or *-dóttir* ("daughter"). For example, when a man named Magnús has a son whom he calls Sigurður, the child's name will be Sigurður Magnússon (i.e. "son of Magnús"). It is also legally permissible to choose the name of the mother or, should the father not acknowledge the child, that of the grandfather, again with the additional suffix -son or -dóttir (*Lög um mannanöfn* 1996 nr. 45, May 17, 1996).[15] Last names are not often used in daily speech. People are addressed by their first names, and the telephone book is arranged by first names. Should someone want to know a person's last name, the constructions "Hvers dóttir ertu?" ("whose daughter are you") or "hvers son ertu ("whose son are you?"), or simply "hverra manna ertu?" ("to which people do you belong?") are used.

Owing to the use of patronymics, people of one and the same family can have different surnames. Nevertheless, names in Iceland, as in other societies (Firth 1998, 43), are an important means of positioning children in a network of social relations, most importantly that of kin. As noted, Icelanders' last names confirm their patrilineage,[16] but only in one generation. Owing to the fact that Icelandic society is characterised by a bilateral kinship system, relations with one's matrilineage are also significant. In an attempt to confirm kinship ties with paternal and maternal kin through several generations, continuity is created by reproducing first names from both paternal and maternal relatives. This tradi-

---

13 List of names on the website of The Icelandic Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs: http://www.rettarheimild.is/mannanofn/

14*Mannanafnanefnd*, http://www.rettarheimild.is/DomsOgKirkjumala/Mannanafnanefnd/um-mannanafnanefnd/nr/1082

15 *Lög um mannanöfn*, http://www.althingi.is/lagasofn/nuna/1996045.html

16 This excludes those children whose last names derive from those of their mothers or grandfathers.

tion is commonly found in societies with a patronymic naming system (Tebbenhoff 1985, 569), even though the reproduction of first names has appeared in diverse forms in the Nordic countries. Gustav Storm has found evidence of the practice of naming children after dead relatives, especially grandparents or great-grandparents, but also siblings of grandparents, as far back as the ninth century (Storm 1893, 210). Prior to the ninth century, a child name's was either a compound of the names of two relatives, or composed from the name of the father and the mother (or of a relative) to which a new part was added (ibid., 203).

The importance of the reproduction of first names was especially evident in Iceland during periods of high infant mortality. In the years prior to 1870, there were numerous diseases about, diphtheria in particular, which could be fatal to small children. The practice of giving children cow's instead of mother's milk has also been implicated as a cause of death (Hastrup 1992, 91-108). Figure 10 presents naming practices during a period of high infant mortality. The material is derived from the book *Hrunamenn* (Jónsson 1999). The people presented in the diagram are the ancestors of the people at the farm of Birtingaholt, where I conducted fieldwork in 2001. The diagram demonstrates that names are transferred vertically, between different generations, and horizontally, between brothers and between sisters.

The diagram illustrates that Helgi Magnússon and Guðrún Guðmundsdóttir named their first children Arndís and Guðmundur, after their maternal grandparents. This preference for the maternal grandparents might be related to the fact that Helgi and Guðrún took over the farm from Guðrún's parents. The second son is named Magnús, after his paternal grandfather. Very sadly, both he and his sister died when only a few weeks old. To keep the names Arndís and Magnús in the family, Helgi and Guðrún named both their fifth son and seventh son Magnús. The name Arndís returned when Guðrún gave birth to her eleventh child. This girl also received the name Sigríður, after both her deceased sister and the second wife of her maternal grandfather. Thus, a child can be named after several relatives.

Among the youngest children, three boys received names from outside the direct kin group: Kjartan Júlíus, Þorgeir, and Lúther.

Names were thus transmitted horizontally and vertically. All the names of the first generation--Magnús, Katrín, Guðmundur, Arndís and Sigríður--return in the third generation, and some names are used several times for the children of one generation. Owing to high infant mortality, one could only be sure that a certain name survived by passing it on to several children. The practice of naming children after their deceased siblings, while simultaneously implying that the newborn may die, shows how important it was for certain names to stay in the family. Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, who studied naming during the nineteenth century in, among other places, Hrunamannahreppur, confirms that my diagram does not a represent a unique case (Garðarsdóttir 1999, 299). She concludes

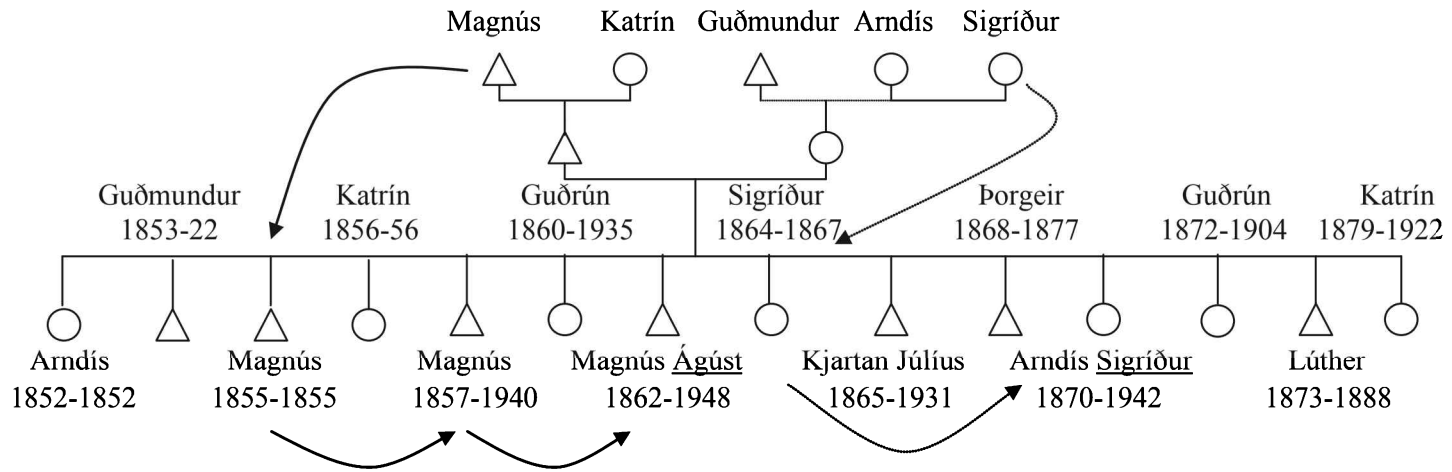

Figure 10. Naming practice among three generations in nineteenth century Iceland

To keep the diagram simple, I have only put arrows for the transmission of the names Magnús and Sigríður. The rest should speak for itself.

that, in seventy-six percent of the cases, parents named their children after deceased siblings When two children bear the same name, this name is always derived from close kin, either grandparents or parents (Garðarsdóttir 1999, 310). Sixty-three percent of the total number of boys whom Ólöf investigated were named after grandfathers or great-grandfathers, whereas only forty-four per cent of all girls were named after their grandparents or great-grandparents. Thirty-three percent of these boys were named after their paternal grandfathers, and only nineteen percent after their maternal grandfather. Seventy-three percent of first-born sons, and more than eighty percent of second-born sons were named after their grandfathers or great-grandfathers. About fifteen percent were named after other kin. Sixty-three percent of first-born girls and sixty-nine percent of second-born girls were named after their grandmothers or great-grandmothers (Garðarsdóttir 1999, 304-05). My diagram corresponds to the findings of Ólöf Garðarsdóttir: It demonstrates a clear preference for naming the eldest children after their grandparents, and children are, indeed, named after their deceased siblings.

Since the late nineteenth century, both infant mortality and the average number of children born per woman, have decreased substantially. The horizontal transmission of names might therefore be expected to have disappeared in modern Icelandic society. Indeed, this is the case. The vertical transmission of names still exists; the eldest children are named after their grandparents. Halldór Sigurðsson has analysed Icelandic naming practices in the twentieth century. He demonstrates that no significant changes occurred in the period from 1930 to 1990, as one-third of the children received the name of their grandparents, both paternal and maternal (Sigurðsson 1996, 48). Halldór Sigurðsson did not, as Ólöf Garðarsdóttir did for the nineteenth century, distinguish between the naming of the eldest and of the youngest children. My own material indicates that nowadays, first- and second-born children are also called after their grandparents.

Að vitja nafns: strategy and cosmology

The practice of að vitja nafns can be seen as a "vocabulary of motives", which is an accepted and shared set of terms that constitute the explanations people use to account for their actions (Jędrej and Shaw 1992, 8). The practice of að vitja nafns is a means of addressing the rather strict social rules which direct the naming of Icelandic children. It gives Icelanders the possibility of adding new names to a closed group of family names. A name positions an Icelandic child in a network of social relations, mainly those of kin. At the same time, in present-day Iceland, a name is expected to express a person's individuality. Since the nineteenth century, an enormous increase in double names can be detected (Garðarsdóttir 1999, 307). Currently, seventy percent of all children have double names (*Hagskinna* 1997, 871, table 18.25). This increase seems to reflect a strong focus on individuality, while at the same time allowing social rules to be followed. In her article on Icelandic naming practices, Ólöf Garðars-

dóttir writes about her personal approach to address the tension between the custom of naming children after their grandparents, and to emphasize their individuality:

> When I gave birth to my first daughter in 1984 I felt no need to name her after close kin. At the time I was a fervent feminist and wanted to stress the girl's uniqueness by giving her a dynamic and unusual name. She was named Katla, a name that, besides being a rather uncommon female name, is the name of a volcano in southern Iceland. I knew that my relatives and friends had expected me to name the girl after my mother, especially since my daughter was her first grandchild. However, I felt no need to strengthen my kinship ties and name her after any of my relatives. (Garðarsdóttir 1999, 298)

Ólöf Garðarsdóttir describes her motivation for refusing to give her daughter her mother's name, and preferred to emphasize her daughter's uniqueness. The widely accepted practice of að vitja nafns gives people, especially women, the option of adding new names to a rather closed group of family names, thereby emphasizing relationships other than those between grandparents and child. Að vitja nafns helps mitigate criticism from the immediate social environment, to which Ólöf Garðarsdóttir exposed herself. The following points indicate that að vitja nafns can be used as strategy: As I have illustrated above, the Icelandic custom is to name the eldest children after their grandparents. To add names from outside the family, a convincing argument is needed, especially when the child in question is the first or second born.

The practice of að vitja nafns takes precedence over the clear preference for naming first-born children after their paternal and maternal grandparents. Also, the first example I gave of the practice of að vitja nafns, in which the deceased girl, Sigrún, appeared in Helga's dreams, points in this direction. Figure 11 shows the naming practice in this family.

Inside the circle are the first and the third generation (bridged by the second generation), which, according to social rules, are supposed to become linked through naming practices. In two cases, the naming shows a deviation from the rules. The daughter who received the name Sigrún is the eldest daughter of Helga and Guðjón. According to the dominant practice of naming, she should have been named after one of her grandmothers, most likely her maternal grandmother.

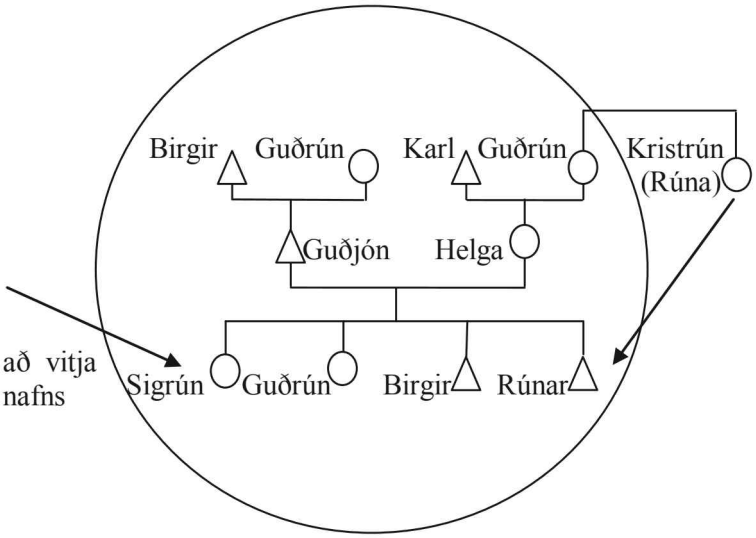

Figure 11. Example of naming in contemporary Iceland

As Ólöf Garðarsdóttir mentions in her article: people expect the first daughter to be named after her maternal grandmother. The name of the maternal grandmother would also be a logical choice, because the land on which Sigrún and her parents live was inherited from her maternal grandparents. Since Helga dreamt of the deceased Sigrún, the common practice was not followed, and a name was taken from outside the direct kin group. Helga and Guðjón's next daughter was named in accordance to social rules. She received the name Guðrún, after both her maternal and paternal grandmothers. The third child born is their first son, and named after his paternal grandfather, again in accordance with social expectations. In the meantime, Helga's sister had a son, which was named after his maternal grandfather, Helga's father. Helga and Guðjón's next son, then, was not named after his maternal grandfather, but after the sister of Helga's mother, who was named Kristrún, but had Rúna as a nickname. This is in keeping with the findings of Ólöf Garðarsdóttir; people are more free to choose a name for their younger children than for their eldest. Because the names of all grandparents have been passed on, Helga and Guðjón can freely choose a name for their youngest son. They could not do so when their first daughter was born, and it is interesting to note that Helga, after having dreamt about the deceased Sigrún, asks her mother how to interpret the dream. As I have demonstrated, her mother would be the person for whom her eldest daughter should be named. Her mother interprets the dream as belonging to the tradition of að vitja nafns, giving her the right to pass her own name on to her coming grandchild. This situation involves shared and accepted "vocabularies of motives" (Jędrej and Shaw 1992, 8). This instance of naming is also a clear example of how a dream often acquires its meaning through negotiation.

I came across one case in which the practice of að vitja nafns was used as a powerful argument in a name dispute, without the dream account actually referring to a dream experience. A woman told me that a female relative of hers, whom I will call Kristín, had a friend of whom she was very fond. Her husband, on the contrary, did not like him. This friend died, and when Kristín was pregnant, she wanted to give her child the name of her deceased friend. Kristín was nevertheless convinced that her husband would refuse. Therefore, she told him that she had dreamt about her friend without having done so, and got her way. The woman who told me the story said: "one may not let a deceased person down") and explained this by saying:

> If my grandmother was still alive and she said to me what I should do, I would say: "Yes, yes" and do things my own way. But when she has died and appears in a dream, what she says in the dream suddenly becomes very important. (m.t.)

This single case should not be interpreted as a sign that the practice of að vitja nafns is a consciously used strategy, but rather as an indication that this practice is so powerful that it can be successfully imitated, in order to obtain the same result. It should be assumed that pregnant women or their relatives normally do remember dreaming about a deceased person. The dream can then serve as an argument, should the name they wish to give their child meet resistance. As I experienced with my own dreams, social practices and cultural ideas on dreams influence which parts of dream experiences are remembered and shared, and they, as I suggest, even influence the content of the dream. Dreams which are recognised as að vitja nafns first acquire meaning when they are shared with others. Their power to convince is linked to the power of gossip: When someone refuses to follow the wish of the deceased person who appears in a dream, many are worried that the health of the child concerned is put at stake. Husbands are sometimes sceptical of these kinds of dream accounts reported by their pregnant wives, but they rarely refuse to follow the wish of the dead and the dreamer. If they refuse, and the child becomes ill, they may be held responsible by others in their social environment. I have illustrated this with the previously mentioned example of the woman whose grandmother became asthmatic and died before her time, because the wish of the álf-woman was not followed completely. Another woman told me how she had rejected the wish of her deceased father, who appeared in her dreams while she was pregnant with her first son. She did not give her second son her father's name either, although he again appeared in her dreams while she was pregnant, urgently wishing his name to be passed on. Both her sons are handicapped, and she told me that the elderly in her local community said that the reason for this was her rejection of her father's wishes. Later, her father's name was passed on through her sister's daughter, who received the female form of their father's name.

Thus, að vitja nafns is not only a means of personal resistance against a well-established system of naming. It is a socially embedded strategy available mainly to pregnant women, but also to others in their environment. To some extent, its pervasiveness is due to its multiple applications, and because it is generally accepted as a credible argument. Að vitja nafns can be used to express a person's individuality, to add new names to a closed group of family names and thereby emphasize a child's (and the dreamer's) relations to certain persons. However, this practice of naming prevails particularly because it is strongly embedded in cosmology. Sharing a dream about a deceased person who wishes to pass his or her name on to a child is a socially embedded strategy, but at the same time, it is recognised as an important manifestation of the agency of the dead (cf. Jędrei and Shaw 1992, 12).

As I have demonstrated, despite the various notions of the dead, two themes are prevalent in contemporary Iceland, for which there also exists historical evidence: Upon death, people move to other realms, where they continue to live their lives, most often among relatives and friends, while we also find a movement in the opposite direction: the dead returning to the world of the living through naming practices. The latter is strongly visualised in the accounts in which a deceased person moves into the house of the dreaming pregnant woman. Thus, the exchange of names seems to involve an exchange of persons between the worlds of the living and the dead. Previously, I have mentioned that a few studies of naming and time conceptions in Old Norse literature have argued for a circular arrangement of life and death, indicating a belief in rebirth. Gustav Storm (1893), for example, puts forward four principal rules which he sees as proof of the existence of belief in rebirth: First, the fact that the names of dead relatives, especially of grandparents and great-grandparents, but also of fathers, mothers, and grandparents' siblings, are transmitted to newborn children; secondly, when a close relative dies shortly before the child is born, the child always receives the name of this relative; thirdly, a son, born soon after his father's death, acquires the name of his father, and, fourthly, if a person has a common name, but also a nickname which is more characteristic of that person, and this person dies, it is the nickname which will be transmitted to a child, and not the common name. According to Storm, all these rules are found in the Nordic countries, while he only finds rules one and two in what he designated as "Germanic" Europe (Storm 1893, 204-05). On the basis of these rules, Storm assumes that belief in rebirth has "only" existed for a thousand years, and he writes:

> Saavidt jeg kan se, er Opkaldelse ikke den ældste germaniske Navneskik. Tvertimod möder man i ældre Tider en anden, man kan gjerne sige modsat Form for Navnegivning, som jeg vil kalde Variation. De nye Navne laaner et sammansætningsled fra Faders eller Moders eller Slægtnings Navn, men har et selvstændigt Led, eller ogsaa er Barnets Navn sammensat af to Slægtningenes Navne; naar f. Ex. Faderen

> hedder Ragin-har og Moderen Amal-gard kan en sön hedde Ragin-hild (fra Faderens 1ste Led) eller Chlot-har (fra det 2det led) eller Amal-fred (fra Moderends förste Led) eller Angil-gard (fra Moderens 2det Led) eller Ragingard (1ste Led fra Faderen, 2det fra Moderen) o.s. v. (Storm 1893, 203-04)
>
> [As far as I can see, naming someone after a dead person is not the eldest Germanic naming custom. On the contrary, in earlier times one meets what one could designate as an opposite form of naming, which I will call *Variation*. The new names borrow a part of a compound of the name of the father, mother, or [other] relative, but has an independent part as well, or the child's name is composed of two names of relatives; when, for example, the father is called Ragin-har and the mother Amal-gard, a son can receive the name Ragin-hild (the first part of the father's name) or Chlot-har (the second part) or Amal-fred (the first part of the mother's name) or Angil-gard (the second part) or Ragingard (first part of the father's name, second part of the name of the mother), etc. (m.t.)]

Storm sought to present a historical comparative study of the Northern European region, which painted naming and rebirth in broad strokes. He does not contextualize his analysis of naming within a study of personhood, nor does he identify what exactly is transmitted, together with the name. Notions of personhood and conceptions of the soul are of crucial importance to understanding the form and meaning of rebirth. As the many case studies of reincarnation in the volume *Amerindian Rebirth* (Mills and Slobodin 1994) demonstrate, rebirth manifests itself in various forms. In some societies, it might be that a deceased person reappears as "whole person" in the world of the living; it is also possible that, should a cosmology exist which ascribes to persons multiple souls, only a name soul is reborn, as is especially known from Inuit societies (see e.g. Nuttall 1994, 127). I have demonstrated that, in Icelandic society too, the notion of multiple souls exists. *Sál*, the Icelandic word for "soul", first entered the language when the Catholic Church introduced the concept. Otherwise, as we have seen, the concepts of *hug* or *hugr*, meaning spirit, thought, wish, and longing (de Vries 1956, 220); *vit*, denoting consciousness, senses, intelligence, cognizance, wit, understanding, and reason; and *fylgja*, people's external spirit, often manifested in animal form, were current in the first centuries after Iceland's settlement. The notion of multiple souls often appears in combination with a conception of the person as "dividual" (Strathern 1988), even in present-day Iceland (Heijnen 2007). This means that the naming system that Storm calls *Variation* does not necessarily indicate that belief in rebirth was non-existent at that time: it may well have covered the idea that the "souls" of several persons were supposed to return in a newborn child. Storm adopts a Christian notion of the per-

son in his work, when he assumes that rebirth means the death and resurrection of the bodiless, but whole, person.

Von Gernet notes in his article, *Saving the Souls* (1994), also found in the above-mentioned volume *Amerindian Rebirth*, that the reappearance of names of the dead in living society does not necessarily indicate the rebirth of the dead. The assumption that the name "only" carries certain desirable qualities, instead of a spirit, might also exist. To some extent this happens when the names of the deceased are transmitted to a newborn child in Iceland. As I mentioned previously, many Icelandic parents do not name their children when they are born, because they first want to see how the personality of the child develops. It is not always apparent that this is a matter of finding a deceased person in the child. Rather, as we also see in other societies, names are associated with certain personal characteristics, which are merged in a person, but to which a person also can contribute.

Thus, in Iceland one finds the idea that a child's personality and name, both carrying certain qualities, should fit together. On the other hand, the examples I presented in this chapter suggest that the transfer of names from the dead to the living in Iceland means not only the transmission of certain personal characteristics, but also of substance. The examples of the pregnant woman dreaming of someone moving into her house; the relationship of avoidance, which my friend's grandfather displayed with regard to her sister, because she had the name of his ex-wife; the assumption that namesakes resemble each other in appearance and behaviour, all these indicate this. In this regard, it is illuminating to compare Icelandic naming with naming practices in Greenland. There has been cultural contact between these two societies, since Icelanders settled in the South of Greenland in the eleventh century. Otherwise, the societies have a very different cultural and historical background, but both are characterised by a bilateral kinship system in which surnames are predominantly patrilineal. Among the Greenlanders, the same practice is found as among the Icelanders: the dead appear in dreams, expressing the wish to pass on their names to newborn children. In Greenland, this is called *atserisoq*. Gitte Tróndheim, who is an Assistant Professor at the University of Greenland, has studied this practice of naming. After having read my articles on að vitja nafns in Iceland (Heijnen 2007, 2010), she wrote to me that she finds many similarities with the practices in Greenland. According to her, atserisoq has a cosmological importance, because the name should never die, as Mark Nuttall has also noted of West Greenland (Nuttall 1992 and 1994). Nuttall adds that Greenlanders recognize the existence of multiple souls, and that it is the name soul (*ateq*) that returns to the sphere of the living (Nuttall 1994, 127). Gitte Tróndheim finds that in Greenland, the passing on of a name from the dead to the living through dreaming is an expression of love for the deceased person, but also helps to relieve grief, to maintain equality between members of the society, and to remember or construct relationships with persons in the society who are respected or wealthy. Addition-

ally, it establishes an extended social network around the child, with the possibility for adoption. Mark Nuttall writes in this respect for West Greenland:

> A person who is named after a dead person is called an *atsiaq*. The dead person, who can have more than one *atsiaq*, is known as the *atsiaq*'s *aqqa*, which is another word for name . . . As an *atsiaq*, the child enters into a multiplicity of relationships with the surviving relatives of its *aqqa*, who will address the child by the kin term they would have applied to their dead relative . . . For example, a dead woman's *atsiaq* will be called 'mother' (*anaana*) by that woman's children, and 'wife' (*nuliaq*) by her husband. In addition to her *aqqa*'s father calling her 'daughter' (*panik*), she will be called 'daughter' by her genitor . . . In this way children learn the identities of those they are named after and acquire a knowledge of the various relationships that link them to an intricate pattern of genealogical and affinal kin . . . On an emotional level, when a child is named, thus, becoming an *atsiaq*, the bond between the deceased and bereaved is re-established. The dead person is said to have 'come home' (*angerlarpoq*) to the bereaved kin. There is a sense that people are not naming a new person, but are welcoming back a new member of family and community. A child does not take a new name, thus becoming altogether another person in the cosmos, but re-enters an existing order of being, of which their name at least is already part. As it can be argued that absence is the essence of death, the transmigration of names ensures that a recently deceased person's presence can be experienced in the present. (Nuttall 1994, 129)

In Greenland, children may receive the names of several deceased persons, sometimes including that of a deceased sibling, and in many Inuit societies (with the exception of contemporary West Greenland, however), naming practices cross-cut gender categories. Despite these similarities with the Icelandic practice of að vitja nafns, the custom of Greenland by which the child enters the kin network of the deceased person's family deviates from the Icelandic cases in an important way. While in Greenland, naming through dreaming transforms non-kin into kin, and generates relationships with people over a rather extended geographical area (Nuttall 1992, 67-69), in Iceland, the reappearance of a (part of the) deceased person in a newborn child does not lead to the child becoming a member of the deceased person's kin group. Rather than establishing an extended social network around the child, að vitja nafns emphasizes a temporal continuation. It makes possible the experience of the direct presence of the dead and thus, of the past in the present. This is related to the Icelandic conception of history. History is not seen as a chronological sequence of interconnected events that influences the courses of individual lives. Rather, history is genealogically conceptualised. Time-depth is experienced by reckoning lineages, and the pre-

sent is the accumulation of actions of previous generations. In this way, the dead are always near, and communication with the dead is an expression of the interconnection between the past, present, and future. I argue that, *minning*, the remembrance or reflection of the deceased person, is continued through the naming of a child. The child will contribute to this reflection, and be remembered after death by transferring the name once again to the subsequent generations. Minning, remembrance through a direct experience of the dead through children, is a crucial theme in Icelandic naming practice. This is expressed in an illuminating way in the following dream of a woman from Hrunamannahreppur:

> It was in the year 1947 that I dreamt that I and my mother-in-law were present in our house. She was named Guðbjörg, which is a good name to dream of. It seemed to me that we were in the West, in Bíldudal. We were only two in the house, and there wasn't any furniture. She stood near the windows, which looked out over one of the streets of the village. I sat on the floor, because there were no chairs. I asked her when the funeral would take place, because it seemed to me that I had gone to the West to attend the ritual in which the earthly remains of my mother, who was buried in Otradals church yard, would be moved to the churchyard of Bíldudal. Guðbjörg said, "the funeral took place yesterday, I thought that you knew that". "What [I said], did she pass by here?" I started to weep violently. "No, she went on the path along the sea, I saw it", Guðbjörg said. I sat on the floor, crying, and said, "I forgot to accompany my mother to her grave, I did not even send her flowers". I felt so tiny and impious, there where I sat and cried. Guðbjörg said, there is not much you can do from here. If possible, you could send some flowers later on. This answer comforted me, in whatever way it could be carried out. I was pregnant when I dreamt this, and I interpreted the dream as indicating that I had not named my daughters--at that time I had two--after my mother. I decided to change that. My mother did not ask me, but showed me my carelessness. (m.t.)

The accumulation of actions indicates that we are not dealing with a circular notion of time, as often is assumed when reincarnation is discussed. Molenaar has formulated this time conception in a simple manner, in his study of Icelandic cosmology in the Old Norse literature. He writes: "That which precedes life is not identical to that which follows life" (Molenaar 1982, 46). This is crucial to understanding Icelandic naming practices and notions of personhood. Even though the dead are thought to return to the world of the living, and, thus, are experienced in the present, the identity of the child is not solely the identity of a deceased person. Að vitja nafns, if successful, involves a merging of identities. As I argued elsewhere (Heijnen 2007), the Icelandic notion of personhood allows one to simultaneously be "self" and "other". This merging of identities

has a strong temporal component, and involves the "becoming" of the individual in the flow of history. This spiral, rather than circular notion of time, is actually found in many of the case studies which are presented in Mills' and Slobodin's volume on American Indian and Inuit rebirth (1994). Also Nuttall notes of Greenland: ". . . naming as a mode of classification, as a phenomenon that confers a social identity on the person who, while being him or herself, is nonetheless regarded as a returned deceased relative" (Nuttall 1994, 124).

This double identity involves a dialectical process of becoming human. The dead give life, assign a fate to the child, a script for life, while they themselves become alive once again. This process involves a complex relationship between the necessity of remembering, but also forgetting the dead. When a part of the deceased person has returned to the living world and the living, thus, have shown their care and respect for the deceased person, the deceased person will transform into an ancestor, perhaps guiding the living through problems and crises, inescapable for humans living life, perhaps turning silent. This process is visualised in contemporary Iceland in photographs. The photograph of those loved ones who have recently died may be given a special place in the living room, decorated with flowers and candlelight. When everyday life, once again prevails the time of sorrow (and remembering), through the reintegration of the dead in the living world, the photograph will be hung on the wall, amongst other pictures of ancestors.

When I dream
I always dream by myself
Not with other people
Not yet anyway
So no one can see
Björk[1]

Chapter 6 Amongst the Living: The Dreamer and the Other

Introduction

In 2006, I spoke with an Icelandic psychotherapist who mentioned that many Icelanders have a problem with the self. By this he meant that, rather than talking about their anxieties, wishes, and feelings, Icelanders would only indirectly communicate their states of mind and heart. He pointed out that the anecdote is a typical form of communication among Icelanders, addressing events not in the life of the narrator, but in the lives of others. The psychotherapist took dreams as his example, and contended that this indirect manner of communicating is reflected in the way many Icelanders interpret their dreams. Rather than seeing dreaming as a way of processing emotions and personal experiences, Icelandic dreamers regard their dreams as omens of future happenings, forecasting not only coming events in their own lives, but also in the lives of family members, neighbours, or Icelandic society in general. The psychotherapist finds this problematic, and one of his professional objectives is to help Icelanders see their dreams as expressions of their feelings, wishes, and anxieties, rather than as gateways to the world surrounding them.

The idea that dreams only reflect innerworlds, and that they are of no value to anyone other than the dreamer can also be traced in current anthropological theories of dreaming. As discussed in chapter 1, in *Dreaming. Psychological and Anthropological Interpretations* Barbara Tedlock criticizes the work of Johannes Fabian for presenting a sharp division between anthropology, which investigates dreams as intentional messages, and psychology, which starts from the idea of dreams as internal experiences. Tedlock and the other authors of the volume argue that a focus on the self would resolve this anthropological/ psychological divide (Tedlock 1987, 26). The volume, *Dreaming and the Self, New Perspectives on Subjectivity, Identity and Emotion,* edited by Jeanette Mageo, is a recent attempt to integrate psychological and anthropological approaches through an investigation of the relation between dreaming, dream narration, and the self. Mageo's concept of the self is not solely reflexive and rational. Inspired by psychoanalysis, especially by the work of Jung and Lacan, she sees the self

1 Ed.: Craig Wood; Produced by: Andy Picheta; A Propaganda Production; PolyGram video 1994 One Little Indian records Ltd.

as interrelational, immersed in complex emotions, and engaged in social communication (Mageo 2003, 21). Elaborating on the work of Dorothy Eggan (see chapter 1), Mageo suggests that the experience of dreaming and dream narration expresses psychocultural problems. Addressing these problems with the help of identification/(dis)identification processes, dreaming and dream narration become a form of identity-making through the integration of the feelings the dreamer has towards other persons. Mageo writes:

> As in Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia (1981), in dreams the self has multiple voices. These voices are those of people appropriated from waking life, who represent our own subself fragments. The dream is the self as other(s), with whom we seldom have unproblematic relationships. Here, the presence of alterity in subjectivity is exposed. Dreams continually splice self with other, complicating "me/not me" recognitions. Dream characters are composites of people we know or have known in life and in tales, but also our feelings/thoughts in other guises and those of others about us that we have interiorised. In this regard, dream symbols are at once about the subject and the social world; everything in them has both allegiances. The self, then, is much larger than conscious identifications; dreaming provides insight in the congeries of identities that it encompasses. Combining Vygotsky's and Jung's ideas, one might view the self as involving a continuing process of incorporating others to make an identity. In dreams, this identity is then splintered into part selves who derive from these others and who carry our emotional reactions to them upon waking, the part selves we meet in dreams are projected back onto others, who later enter our dreams re-presenting our own feelings for us - and so ad infinitum. (Mageo 2003, 9-10)

According to Mageo, those who appear on the dream stage are representations of the dreamer's feelings for these persons. Rather than identifying these dream figures as existent individuals, they appear in the dream process as parts of the self. Thus, dreams play a major role in communicating problems that the dreamer, as a social being, experiences.

While the work of Mageo is inspired by Carl Jung, Waud Kracke, another anthropologist who, for many years, has worked with the topic of dreaming, is influenced by the work of Sigmund Freud. In his paper, which is included in Mageo's *Dreaming and the Self*, Kracke discusses the meaning of dreams among the Parintintin Indians in Brazil. He notes:

> Oftentimes a dream may be interpreted as predicting hunting success, or some other benign outcome, distracting from a deeper meaning representing a much more intimate wish or anxiety - a conflict. Sometimes the dreams which are subject to such distancing interpretations

> are dreams which deal relatively openly with highly emotional and conflict-laden content: sexual dreams, for example, or dreams of fighting, may be given benign interpretations as predicting success in the hunt. Thus Manezinho dreamed of João Boabá's "big penis", twice that I know of - once while hunting, and he immediately interpreted it as a prediction of getting tapir (he failed, because he told the dream by the fire in the morning); and again, in a highly charged dream: João was making love with his young wife Ia when her brother grabbed his (presumably erect) penis and broke it off. Again, Manezinho at first interpreted this scene as predicting that he (or someone) would kill a tapir; but I undermined this bit of secondary elaboration by pointing out the coincidence and asking if João's big penis stirred any childhood memories. (It did: an early memory of seeing a grown man's penis - João's, in fact - when he was five.) But then he reinstated the distancing effect of the traditional interpretations. He now spoke of seeing the woman's genitals in the dream, and surmised that this meant that he would wound himself. He found confirmation of this interpretation in the fact that earlier in the morning, he had knocked a healing machete cut on his leg and it started bleeding again. I had neutralised the effectiveness of the defense with my interpretation, but he found another that had enough impact to defuse the anxiety aroused by the childhood memory, and his rationalisation was buttressed by reality.
>
> Manezinho later made a very astute self-observation about the anxiety-reducing function of traditional interpretations. Commenting on a dream about a marital fight (I think it also involved João Boabá), he recalled, "At first when I was little I was afraid when I had dreams like that, I didn't know what it was. I told Papa. I thought it was an añang [ghost or malevolent spirit] that I had dreamed of. Sometimes you dream of a woman, and it is game. When you dream of a man, his prick, it's a tapir you're going to kill. (Kracke 2003b, 156-57)

As Kracke's quote demonstrates, several problems arise when adopting psychoanalytical standpoints within an anthropological theory of dreaming. A first problem is the idea that human life is about anxiety and crisis, and that dreams function to repress, express, or reduce these feelings of anxiety. The reduction of anxiety in members of a society contributes to the creation of coherence and order in society. A second problem lies in Kracke's statement that the emotions that are expressed in dreams are related to the dreamer's past, often to childhood experiences. In the above quote, Kracke presents the case of Manezinho, who - Kracke presumes - feels guilt about the death of his son. Kracke links this dramatic event to feelings Manezinho had about his incestuous childhood relationship with his cousin. His approach to dreams is based on Freud's assumptions that the anxieties and wishes expressed in dreams originate from childhood ex-

periences, and that dreams appear in disguise, and need "dream work". Kracke formulates this in the following way: "the local meaning distracts from a deeper meaning, which the anthropologist needs to reveal" (Kracke 2003b). In my opinion, this approach, whereby the anthropologist acts as a kind of psychotherapist, fails, because of a misleading interpretation of the narrative, and of the elements that constitute the narrative. Kracke views the dream as a "whole", which can be isolated from the context of everyday life. The dream receives a meaning, which is constituted by childhood experience, and is thus fixed in the past. In this way, the dream is only meaningful to the dreamer.

Foucault's criticism of Freud's theory of dreaming raises the important point that, in the dream, there is not only meaning and counter-meaning, but also expression. The dream contains the world in which its meaning takes shape. According to Foucault, the dream world is an *idios kosmos*. The *idios* refers to the solitude of the dreamer, being in a world of its own, while *kosmos* indicates that the dream is more than a subjective experience: the dream has "the lineaments, prefigurations, of transcendence and worldhood" (Foucault 1986, 22). Adjusting Foucault's argument by giving it a sociocultural component, I wish to make two points. First, the dream experience bears not only meaning, but also the conditions for that meaning, which are provided by a person's feelings, emotions, and experiences, and by local epistemologies, cosmologies, and social networks shared by members of a society. Second, it is through sharing "life worlds", that people are able to engage in interpretations of each other's dreams, and to see them as tokens of coming events. Thus, the dream is at the same time world and "world - or life making".

I will now demonstrate the consequences of such an approach, by discussing dream accounts wherein the focus is directed towards persons other than the dreamer. In Iceland, the relational cosmology infuses dreamers to recognise those appearing in the dreams, not as representations of their own feelings, but as existent individuals. According to this Icelandic point of view, dreams may be meaningless to the dreamer, while they may be meaningful to those who appear on the dream stage.

Dreaming, the self and the other in Iceland

To illustrate the above, I will now turn to ethnography, to contemporary Iceland, and to the dreams of a man whom I will call Jón. The dreams listed below he recounted to me orally in 2006, but he also wrote me a letter describing this series of dreams, and the related waking events, which I have translated, below. In 2008, we discussed these dreams once again. The dreams refer to a woman, whom I will call Rósa. Rósa is a diabetic patient who lives at an institute for people with psychological and physical problems, where Jón worked at that time as night watchman.

28.01.2000 Letter on dreams

Dream 1
I dreamt that I was at work and I was climbing up a certain wall, on my back was the person with diabetes and what I was doing was . . . I was raising her level of insulin. High up on the wall was a kind of radiator, or window, and I needed to get her in there, on the other side of the window were staff members, I only remember one staff member, and that was Hildur.

I dreamt this dream when I had several days off, and when I returned to work, I looked it up in the logbook, the night when I had dreamt this, and it all fell into place. In the morning, her insulin level had dropped seriously, and it was necessary to call an ambulance. Hildur and another woman were on watch.

Dream 2.
I was at work, and in one way or the other I knew that Rósa, who is the woman with diabetes, lacked coagulant in her blood. Then I meet her in the corridor and I said to her: "Yes, now nothing should happen with you, not even a tiny wound, because then you will lose too much blood". The end.

This I dreamt when I had several days off from work. While I was at home, she was in the hospital because of her diabetes, and I knew that she was coming home at the same time that I had my holidays, but she didn't come home before the day I started to work again. When I woke up after the dream, I was almost sure that there was some truth in the dream, at least enough to tell my dream to Haukur, and I also told him the previous dreams and how they had turned out [in waking life] in order to account for this dream.

The second or third night after I had started working again, Rósa had a severe grandmal seizure, she is also epileptic, but in such a mild form that it is often forgotten, and some of the staff members do not even know it. I have seen her having seizures in the two years that I have been working here. They have always been very short. But now she had an attack for more than twenty minutes, and normal procedures did not work at all, therefore I decided to call an ambulance. The doctor who came said that it would go away by itself. I said that this was very unusual for her, and that I was alone in a home with other ill people, and I insisted that she spend the night at the hospital. When she was finally taken away, she had had the attack for forty-five minutes. Then I called the manager of the home, and told her

what had happened. Then she told me that while Rósa had been at the hospital, she had also had such a grand mal seizure, and a blood test had shown that she did not have any anti-epileptic medication in her blood, and later tests demonstrated only a low dose of anti-epileptic medication. I asked why nothing had been done, why nobody had tried out other medication, increased the dose, or made some more examinations. Why had nothing happened? She said that she did not know.
Later that night, the hospital phoned and said that her seizure had stopped. They had examined her, and could not find anything unusual. She was sent home. I was not satisfied, and pressed and pressed, and got to talk with the doctor who had examined her, told him about the blood test which had been done recently. He said that now, anti-epileptic medication had been detected, although in low doses, but that "nothing out of the ordinary had been found".

Some days later, when the case was investigated, it turned out that when she was at the hospital for the first time, it was decided that she needed a higher dose of anti-epileptic medication, which was registered in her report, but they had forgotten to change this on her medication card, when she was discharged from the hospital. So, when I later talked with the manager about all this, I reminded her of the dream, about which I had told her, but it was as if she did not listen or did not understand what I said. Previously, it turned out that the medication card had been wrong, I had spoken with my father, and told him about my dream, he also continued talking as if I had not mentioned a dream at all. Strange (m.t.).

This series of dreams, which are connected to each other, and the narrative referring to waking life that is spun between them, involves multiple actors: The dreamer himself ("I"), the diabetic woman for whom the dreamer is responsible, and expresses concern, his colleagues, the manager of the home, his friend Haukur, with whom he once shared an apartment and who is a profound dreamer himself, with a keen interest in dreams, the dreamer's father, a doctor without any interest in dreams.

By narrating the dreams, the dreamer presents himself (to others and himself) as a devoted employee, a moral and caring person who distinguishes himself from the carelessness of others around him. This message communicated in the shared dream is partly a social positioning in a professional context, but also in a broader context, vis-a-vis his friend who is a profound dreamer and keen dream interpreter. Jón mentions that some truth needs to exist in his dreams before he is able to tell them (and the related waking events) to his friend.

Jón also tells his father of the dreams, although he knows that his father never pays heed to dreams, and to his manager, who also ignores his having

previously mentioned the dream to her. Knowing that his father has no interest in sharing dreams, Jón takes a personal risk here. At a different time, Jón told me that it was much better to talk with his father about food than about dreams. Jón's aim though, was to get a professional view of the situation from his father, who is a doctor.

Without rejecting the argument that some aspects of this dream narration can be interpreted as acts of identity-making in the sense that Mageo describes and that dreams could be a strong tool to socially position oneself, I suggest that the dream extends the relationship between Jón and the diabetic woman, acknowledging that the woman in the dream is more than a subself fragment of Jón. In the dream, the relationship between these two persons evolves from their relationship in waking life, but, also, their relationship in waking life evolves from their relationship in Jón's dream life. Many Icelanders would not reflect on the question of whether the diabetic woman is aware of her appearance in the dream or not, but on the fact that Jón's having dreamt that he had carried her on his back and tried to elevate her insulin level has consequences, not only with regard to his behaviour, but also for Rósa's life. Jón is immersed in the experience of the dream, but he does not lose his reasoning capabilities. From the perspective of the dream, Jón's self in the dream is not less "true" nor irrational than in waking life. In the dream, Jón knows what he is doing, he perceives the situation and the actors involved, and he acts accordingly. His attempt to raise the level of insulin by assisting the women to crawl up the wall is as logical in the dream as an injection would be in waking life. In the dream, he was confronted with a problem and found a solution. Because of the dream, Jón knows that he needs to be attentive to the woman, but not only that; the dream motivates him to act in a different way than he otherwise would have done. Even though medical personnel states that nothing is the matter, Jón combines his experience from waking and from dreaming life, and concludes that things are not what they should be. He urges the doctor to investigate the case, and phones the manager of the home, both to inform her of the event, and to convince her that something should be done. Jón's dream not only expresses his concern for the life and well-being of a patient for whom he is responsible, but generates changes in her life, and awareness amongst his colleagues.

The first time I met Jón was in 1996. He has a daughter, who at that time was only four years old. Her mother and he had separated shortly after she was born. He shared an apartment with his friend, Haukur, where his daughter visited him during the weekends. Because of his keen interest in dreams, dreams were often the topic of our conversations, and I visited him in his apartment to record the many dreams he dreamt, which provided him with information about his own life and the lives of acquaintances, friends, and family. One such evening, when both he and his friend were at home, he told me of the following dreams, which he had dreamt. In his opinion, the dreams revealed events, not in his own life, but in the lives of two others he knows.

Twice, I have dreamt a dream that pointed to the fact that my friends would have a child. And the first dream, yes, I had lived alone with my daughter for seven months, after we separated, her mother and I. I dreamt that I had borrowed a car and needed to return it. It was evening. I had just put my daughter to bed. Then, I went out to return the car and, when I was walking along the street, which is called Gunnarsbraut - I was heading for Hlemmur [the bus station] to take the bus home. Then I discovered while walking that I had forgotten to arrange for a babysitter. I was terribly upset. What have I done?! I was very worried. My child at home, all alone! I hurried to Hlemmur, constantly looking at my watch. I did not catch the bus. What if she woke up and began to cry! She was home all alone! This is not the way one behaves! So absolutely. . . Finally, the bus arrived, I got on, and was on my way to pay, but then, behind the steering wheel, there was a girl I knew. I was very [surprised]: "Are you the bus driver?" She said something like: "Yes, I'll get my driving license tomorrow." Or was it "yesterday", something like that, I do not remember it. She asked me to sit in the front, next to her. That pleased me. The bus began to move off. All of a sudden, I noticed that behind me, on the bus, there was another girl I knew, who was a mother, she had a child. Recently, I had met this girl, about whom I dreamt, and she had said that she had become a mum. This girl I have known for a long time. Then the dream turned incoherent. I woke up while we were driving, or something like that. I woke up.

Then I started to think about the dream. Why did I dream this? Jóna behind the wheel, bus, bus driver. Look, you know, she [the bus driver] is transporting many passengers. I was thinking about this. Children were on my mind. Why was the girl, who is called Hildur, sitting next to me? And I thought, while on the bus: "She has a child". I had the association with a child. Jóna, she was pregnant, she was driving, she was the bus driver for many passengers. Parents on the move! Something like that, it was just something that I was thinking, just a feeling. I had it figured out. Then I asked her [Jóna] [in waking life] whether she was pregnant. She asked me how that had occurred to me. She had not yet told anyone. I did not know that it was a secret. I only asked her whether it was right. I just said to her: "I dreamt about it. I just figured it out." And yes, she was pregnant.

And then, somewhat later, I dreamt again. I still lived with my daughter, but we had a smaller apartment. We had less money, and had moved into a smaller apartment. We lived opposite this same street [to where we lived before]. I was unemployed, and I was on my way, that morning, I dressed myself and went out to punch in at the unemployment office. I was walking the same direction as in my first dream, passing by Hlemmur. I set off, was thinking of Hlemmur, of

> the area I was heading to. Then I realised: I just went out! I left my daughter behind, all alone, she was sleeping alone at home. I was thinking: "If I am quick, then perhaps I can return before she wakes up. Perhaps she will wake up and be quiet and pleased. She is home alone. Perhaps it will turn out all right." Then I started thinking about my friend, who lives near Hlemmur, where I was passing by. I was hurrying, checking my watch, knowing that my child was home alone. But despite this, I was thinking of saying hello to my friend, who lived nearby. Then the dream ended. I started to think: "This dream is completely similar to the other dream, and then a child was born." Then I started thinking about my friend. He was the only one I knew in the dream, and it all fell into place. I asked him whether his girlfriend was pregnant. He did not know anything about a child being on its way, but she had become pregnant at that time. And then, something else, before his girlfriend got pregnant, I had told this friend of mine about my dream about the other childbirth. He had thought about this dream, and said to me: "You are alone with your child, and she, Hildur, who was also present in the dreams, she is also a single mother. Jóna was not single at that moment. She was together with her boyfriend. They lived together. He said that she would also become single. He was right (m.t.).
>
> .

The Icelandic conceptualisation of the person, which is already apparent in Jón's dreams about the diabetic patient, is crucial for understanding the way he interprets his dreams. The idea that persons present in dreams are not representations of feelings, emotions, or personal characteristics, but that they are, in a way, themselves, generates an interpretation completely opposite to what psychoanalytical hermeneutics would claim. From the perspective of waking life, the dreamer himself is a less important actor than the others in the dream. The dream reveals itself to be about the other, and not about the dreamer himself.

The implications of the acknowledgement of this approach to interpreting dreams is far-reaching. If we follow Kracke's approach, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Jón's two dream narratives addressing his life with his daughter can be divided into two parts: the dream and the interpretation. The dream, in Kracke's approach, is seen as a true and whole experience which might, for example, express the dreamer's anxiety for not living up to the expectations of fatherhood. Following Kracke's approach, Jón's own interpretation could be seen as a way of reducing his anxieties by moving the attention away from the dream's "real" meaning.

The rigid opposition that Kracke draws between signifier and signified, corresponding to the dream and its interpretation, and to dream life and waking life, is blurred in Jón's narrative. Jón does not only recount a dream. Rather, he contextualizes the dream continuously, with information from waking life. Sometimes, he does not even identify which events belong to dream life and which

belong to waking life. In his story, waking and dream life flow into each other. Jón starts the first dream by saying: "And the first dream, yes, I had lived alone with my daughter for seven months, after we separated, her mother and me. I dreamt that I had borrowed a car and needed to return it." The second dream goes: "And then, somewhat later, I dreamt again. I still lived with my daughter, but we had a smaller apartment. We had less money, and had moved into a smaller apartment." Waking and dream experience cannot function without each other. The dream world can become waking life, while actions and events in waking life may trigger dreams, which in their turn have implications for waking life. Moving through dream and waking life always involves engagement with the other, and with life itself.

A dream of another good friend of mine, I will call her Jóhanna, can serve as an additional example. One of her cousins had a relationship with a woman from Palestine. This woman had fled her country together with her five children, leaving her husband behind. The Palestinian woman felt that she could never return to her country, because she would risk being murdered. Jóhanna and this woman did not know each other very well. Nevertheless, one night, this woman appeared in Jóhanna's dreams. She was dressed in black, with a scarf around her neck, and was terribly sad. Upon awakening, Jóhanna reflected on the dream. She very much doubted whether she should contact the woman and ask her whether something was wrong because she only knew the woman superficially. Nevertheless, the dream had made such a strong impression on Jóhanna that she kept on thinking of this woman. Then, at some point in time, Jóhanna decided to call her and ask her whether something was going on. The Palestinian woman told her that her relationship with Jóhanna's cousin had ended, and that she thought of returning to Palestine. Jóhanna urged her not to leave Iceland. They talked, the woman stayed, and they became good friends.

Jóhanna also has a friend who has a drinking problem, and she follows this friend's well-being through her dreams, as does the woman's sister. As soon as the woman with a drinking problem enters a difficult period and begins drinking again, Jóhanna knows that, through her dreams. She then calls this woman, and asks how she is doing. Her friend appreciates that those close to her follow the developments in her life through their dreams. It gives her the support necessary for dealing with her problems.

Thus, in Jóhanna's dream life, too, relationships and experiences from waking life are continuous with, and in turn influence, her actions, thoughts, and social relationships in waking life. Those who appear in her dreams retain their identities, while they move from waking life to dream life and back again. These examples demonstrate the important meaning dreams can have for those other than the dreamer, and the significant imprint dreams may leave on social life.

Conclusion

The continuity of individual identities between waking and dreaming life is a prevailing feature of Icelandic dreaming and dream interpretation throughout the thousand years in which we are able to trace dreams in the Icelandic written and oral sources. Whether we deal with the Old Norse literature, the folktales, or modern dream accounts, the identity of the other is rarely blurred. As we have seen in the Old Norse literature, the other is either represented by the person him- or herself, or by an animal, which the dreamer or the dream interpreter recognizes as the inherent counterpart of a person existing in waking life. As we move further along in time, those appearing in dreams are considered as being themselves. We even find a few examples in folktales, in which the dreamer only can be in one place at a time, either in bed, sleeping, or in the dream world, the body being fully integrated with the soul. This means that when someone is dreaming, and thus present in the dream world, their bed is empty.

The recognition of the other in dreams is extremely important for an understanding of the interpretations Icelanders may give to their dreams, and the actions they may undertake after having dreamt a certain dream. In the last of Jón's dream accounts presented here, he told me that his friend was the only person he knew in the dream, therefore he knew that the dream was meant for his friend, and "it all fell into place". In 2008, more than ten years after he had dreamt and explained his dream to me, I asked Jón whether he thought, at this point, that the dream he dreamt might also mean something for himself. He remained convinced that the dream had nothing to do with himself, but was dreamt "for his friend" (*fyrir vini minum*).

In chapter 2, I demonstrated that in the Old Norse literature dreams play a central role in revealing the courses of human lives, of society, and of the cosmos. Fate was seen as inherently connected to becoming human (*urðr*) and to creation (*sköp*). The examples in this chapter illustrate once again that fate is not solely an individual matter. Not only because one can dream about coming events relevant to their society or the cosmos as a whole, but also because dreamers can dream about their own fate, and about that of others. The idea that parents can dream dreams that refer to the courses of their children's lives, and friends might dream about their friends' destinies, arises from the recognition that dreamers are, first and foremost, social beings. Sometimes, dreams may reinforce feelings of social responsibility and friendship, as we have seen in this chapter, and in chapter 5, too, in the example of the woman who dreamt about the man in whose house she had spent two summers when she was a child. After his death, he asked her for help by appearing frequently in her dreams. She helped him because she wished to, but also because her own well-being was influenced by his problems. When she helps him, she also helps herself.

The social meaning of the dream is extended in the process of narration and interpretation. When dreams are interpreted, others are involved in writing the script of life of the dreamer or of others to whom the dream refers. This often happens through a negotiation of meaning, whereby both the experience and

status of the dream interpreter are significant, as I will discuss in the next chapter. While the meaning of a dream is not always fixed, once a dream has been interpreted, events may move in the direction of one of the various scenarios proposed, in this way confirming the truth of the dream.

If we assume that the "other" in dreams is not more than a "subself fragment", as Mageo (2009) argues, the fact is ignored that dreams dreamt and shared, through social relationships, can have consequences for the life of persons who have appeared in the dream and not only for the life of the dreamer. We would completely miss the texture of social relationships and personhood in Iceland, and the imprints which dreams leave on everyday life and action.

Chapter 7 The Messiness of Dream Theories and Cosmologies

Introduction

In recent anthropological studies on dreaming, an important effort is being made to recognize the presence of a diversity of dream theories in one and the same society. Vincent Crapanzano writes in his article, "The Betwixt and Between of the Dream":

> The several co-existing approaches to the dream in any society, including ours, have diverse authority, but authority all the same, and resist systematic integration. They are certainly not without contradiction . . . This 'messiness' is a social fact, and it should be treated as such . . . The messiness is a response to the dream and no doubt facilitates the way the dream . . . is 'managed' in different social settings. (Crapanzano 2001, 232-33)

In the previous chapters, I have discussed how dream sharing is rooted in the assumption that the activity of dreaming has the potential to reveal temporal and spatial spheres hidden from the waking mind. I have chosen to discuss this dream theory in more detail than other Icelandic dream theories, owing to its extreme persistence in Icelandic society. However, even though this dream theory is known to all Icelanders, not every Icelander endorses it. In this chapter, I will do justice to the "messiness" of dream theories, which I encountered in contemporary Iceland.

Crapanzano argues that the "messiness" of dream theories, which exists in every society, is a response to the creative force of the dream experience, and to the tendency of the dream to encourage its own decontextualisation, or what might be better described as its own special contextualisation (Crapanzano 2001, 232-34). His argument, though significant, does not explain why dream experiences only generate four main dream theories in Iceland. Cosmology seems to play a crucial role, here. I suggest that the intrinsic link between dream sharing and cosmology sets constraints on the number of dream theories that are generated by a single society.

Thus, in this chapter I seek to describe how various coexistent Icelandic perspectives on dreaming and the dream are related to different cosmologies. I start with a presentation of the dreams and the perspectives on dreams of four contemporary Icelanders: a farmer, a pastor, a computer scientist, and of a man who calls himself a dream scientist. Their ways of looking at and applying dreams to everyday life diverge from those described in previous chapters. In the second part of this chapter, I demonstrate how these perspectives (including dream sharing, discussed in the previous chapters) are related to four cosmologies, which I designate with the analytical terms "traditional", "Christian", "modernist", and "post-modern". My use of the term "traditional" needs some prefatory clarification. I follow the usage of Leif Selstad, who argues that tradition is both

constructivist, that is, a symbolic construction of the past that gives meaning to the present, and a continuation of culture (Selstad 1998, 202).

Michael Herzfeld suggests that cosmologies form a rich source of imagery and argumentation, which individuals and groups can creatively mine, as they search for explanations and justifications of their activities (Herzfeld 2001, 193). I want to adjust his argument, by looking at the internal forces that generate for each of the four cosmologies that I detected in Icelandic society. Each cosmology has its ways of shaping the creativity of individual thinking and imagery. The argument put forth in this chapter is that these cosmologies are only partially linked to different domains of Icelandic society (e.g. classes; urban versus rural), but frequently coexist in the same person. Therefore, these coexisting cosmologies do not appear in a historical sequence or developmental spectrum, but interact on the basis of their qualitative differences. In other words, my focus is not on clashing cosmologies; instead, I present the internal forces that reproduce each cosmology, and argue that these forces themselves influence the ways in which they are distributed throughout society.

The farmer and the telepathic nature of dreaming

> Draumurinn er líf
> en ekki endurminning um líf
> eða hugsun um líf
> (Pjeturss 1919-1922, 451)
>
> [The dream *is* life,
> Not the remembrance of life,
> Nor the conception of life (m.t.)]

In chapter 4, I mentioned the instance of an Icelandic farmer who wished to build a house on a place where he thought that *huldufólk* might live. He made three heaps of sand at the place he had in mind, and asked to be warned in his dreams of the three coming nights, should the huldufólk have any objections to his plans. This man also told me of several dreams that foretold weather conditions. Dreaming about a barn full of hay is, for him, and for many other Icelandic farmers, a sign that there will be much snow. He said that if, on the contrary, Icelandic farmers dream that they have nothing to give their livestock, good weather is on its way. Three times that winter, the farmer had dreamt of barns full of hay and, indeed, a lot of snow had fallen, as his dreams foretold. At the end of the winter of 2000, when I met him again, he told me that winter was not over yet. I asked him whether this remark indicated that he recently had dreamt something. He confirmed that only a short while previously, he had dreamt of hay in his barn.

As the farmer's comments demonstrate, it is quite common among Icelanders who are engaged in agriculture to share dreams about hay. In my research material, the symbol of hay is mentioned thirty-six times; of those times, on

thirty-five occasions it was stated that dreaming of hay refers to snow coming in waking life. Only once was hay said to be related to someone's impending death, but in this case, hay was related to different dream images than the ones mentioned above. Thus, at first glance, the farmer's use and interpretation of his dreams does not seem to differ from the perspective on dreaming that is discussed in the previous chapters, namely, that dreaming is seen as a way of revealing events or phenomena that remain hidden in waking experience. But when this man told me of the most remarkable dream he had ever dreamt, I discovered a difference to the dream accounts I had heard so far; the crossing of temporal, as well as spatial boundaries, functioned in a different way:

> The most remarkable [dream] I have ever dreamt was, when . . . It seemed to me that I was present at a place that I did not know . . . I was in an old house and needed to go out to look for some object that lay on the ground. I walked out of the house and it was pitch dark, and I crawled on the ground and looked for the object, but did not find it. I stood up again, and looked up at the sky. There was the most beautiful, shining starry sky. I never have seen its like. Big, flickering, clear, I did not recognize one single [star]. My interpretation is that I have been to other stars. Yes, what I came in contact with was present on other stars. It is not possible to see this starry sky from earth. (m.t.)

According to the farmer, the dream reveals a place situated far from earth. The central point is that he does not say he has physically or mentally moved to other stars, but has come in contact with someone who was present somewhere out in the universe.

Upon hearing this dream, I immediately thought of the work on dreaming by the Icelandic geologist, Helgi Pjeturss (1872-1949). The farmer confirmed that he does indeed, endorse Helgi Pjeturss' dream theory. Helgi Pjeturss not only wrote on geological subjects, but published several works on life on other planets. His first book *Nýall* ("New Epoch"), which was published in 1919, is the best known. Dreaming is central to his theory, and viewed as providing a gateway to life in the universe. Dreamers are not supposed to travel themselves, but to establish, through dreaming, telepathic contact with another being. Helgi Pjeturss calls this other being a *draumgjafi* ("dream giver"). A draumgjafi can be situated anywhere: on Earth or on other planets. Dreaming provides the opportunity to perceive places on Earth or in the universe, not by mentally moving there, but through participating in the experience of a dream giver (Pjeturss 1919-1922, 460-61).

Helgi Pjeturss lived in a period of great interest in spiritual matters. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a spiritualist movement developed in Icelandic society, which combined elements of science, the Lutheran religion, and

folk belief (Swatos and Gissurarson 1997, 1).[2] Contact with the dead through scientific experiments was central to this movement, and many *miðilsfundir*, meetings where spiritual specialists acted as mediators between the living and the dead, were organised. Helgi Pjeturss did not believe that the beings who appeared at these meetings were deceased persons, nor that their appearance was simply faked. He suggested that the condition a medium enters when going into trance can be compared with the common condition of sleep. The world that dreamers experience is of the same phenomenological nature as the world a spiritual medium experiences while in trance (Pjeturss 1919, 3, 8-9).

Although not always mentioned explicitly, a similar idea can be found in Icelandic dream accounts. The sphere revealed to people who are supposed to be *skyggn*, and who are able to see or to communicate with the dead, and the sphere revealed to dreamers, are supposed to be of the same nature. However, the idea that these hidden spheres can be revealed and investigated, not by travelling, but through telepathic contact, is a new element in the Icelandic dream discourse of the beginning of the twentieth century. Helgi Pjeturss formulates his findings on dreaming in the following way:

> It is now twenty years since I took it upon me to study the nature of dreams . . . What I expected to obtain was a better understanding of the nature of consciousness . . . Now, I have solved the riddle . . . the nature of dreams is known to me now . . . During sleep, I take part in the life of someone else . . . (Pjeturss 1919-1922, 449, m.t.)

He continues his essay on the nature of sleeping and dreaming by explaining the difference between dreaming, waking perception, and thinking:

> One looks out of the window and sees a horse. This incredible photographic camera, which is called the eye, creates an image of a horse, and it influences the whole person, so that in his mind, an image of a horse has come into being. One walks away from the window, sits down in a chair and starts to think about the horse. But now the content of one's consciousness has become different from what it was when looking at the horse. The conception of a horse is present in one's consciousness; there are several remembrances of the size, colour, and form of the horse. However, an image of the horse is not there. Now, one falls asleep in the chair, and dreams of a horse. And again, one's consciousness has changed; it is different from thinking about the horse, it is more like seeing a horse. To dream about a horse

2 For extensive studies on Icelandic spiritualism, see Pétursson (1980, 1981, 1986, 1990b), and Swatos and Gissurarson (1997).

> is to see a horse, and not to imagine a horse . . . The dream is life, not the remembrance of life, nor the conception of life. (Pjeturss 1919-1922, 450-51, m.t.)

The idea that Helgi Pjeturss expresses here can be traced in the previously mentioned most remarkable dream of the farmer. The farmer does not interpret the beautiful, starry sky that he perceives in his dream as a remembrance, nor as a conception of a starry sky. On the contrary, the starry sky is "life", in the sense that it is real and not a construction of the dreamer. Telepathic contact with a being on another planet makes it possible to perceive (with all the senses) what this being at that moment perceives. In other words, a dream experienced while asleep is the waking experience of another being (Pjeturss 1919-1922, 462). Interestingly, Helgi Pjeturss' equation of waking and dreaming experience is supported by recent cognitive studies. These studies show that dreaming shares common processes and structures with waking thought and experience (Cavallero and Foulkes 1993, 132-33).

In Icelandic, telepathy is called *fjarhrif* or *fjarskyn*. These concepts are related to the word *fjarskyggn*, known from the early Icelandic literature. Fjarskyggn describes the ability to perceive situations or places situated far from the perceiver in waking, conscious life. However, this concept does not refer to telepathic contact as it is understood today. The concept of fjarskyggn implies a different epistemology than fjarhrif or fjarskyn. In the first instance, the perceiver (or a part of the perceiver) moves through different spheres, while in the latter, the suppression of consciousness implies the merging with another mind. Helgi Pjeturss was convinced that the dreamer does not move, but continues to be physically and mentally in the waking world. The difference can be illustrated by comparing the folk tale about the sheriff's wife living at Burstarfell, presented in chapter 4, with the following dream of the farmer:

> Farmer: I find that there is strong evidence of telepathic contact with someone else, when one looks in a mirror and sees a totally different face than one expects.
> Me: Have you experienced that?
> Farmer: Yes
> Me: In a dream?
> Farmer: Yes, I looked in a mirror; I was old and . . . [had] long grey hair all the way down.
> Me: And do you think that the other person you saw in the mirror exists in reality?
> Farmer: I did not know him.
> Me: No, you do not know whether it was you, perhaps, at an old age?
> Farmer: No, it was not me. He was totally different, tall and thin.
> Me: You do not know who he was, not at all?
> Farmer: No, this was a somewhat remarkable dream. (m.t.)

The farmer rejects my idea that the image reflected in the mirror represented himself, only in old age. He says that he did not recognize the person, and adds that it was his draumgjafi, a person who actually exists, and with whom he established telepathic contact through dreaming. In the Icelandic folk tales, the voyage to or the revealing of otherwise hidden spheres is thought to take place through a movement of both body and "soul" into these spheres (e.g. see *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 17, 20, 58) or by the travel of the soul alone. The folk tale of the sheriff's wife at Burstarfell is an example of the latter. The tale recounts that the sheriff's wife slept much longer than the people at the farm were accustomed for her to do. When she woke up, the woman told the members of the household that, during sleep, she had encountered the world of the huldufólk. Other examples of this are the popular folk tale Kötludraumur (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 59) presented in chapter 2, and the dream account in which a pregnant woman was invited by her deceased brother to the sphere of the dead, presented in chapter 5.

The view discussed above, shared by the farmer and Helgi Pjeturss, expresses a different epistemology than these folk tales and dream accounts. Knowledge is not gained through being present in other spheres, but by perceiving other spheres from a distance, through the participation in the experience of another, a draumgjafi. However, a similarity can also be detected. Knowledge is gained through a first-hand experience of the world. In his article, "Globes and Spheres. The Topology of Environmentalism", Tim Ingold distinguishes between a global perspective that presents the world as "lying beneath our feet", and a spherical perspective, wherein the world is supposed to surround us (Ingold 1993, 40). According to the spherical perspective, the world is a "life sphere" (ibid., 32), where knowledge is gained through engagement (ibid., 40-41). Ingold associates the global and spherical perspectives with, respectively, technology and cosmology, a distinction borrowed from Niklas Luhmann. Technology is responsible for placing human society and its interests *outside* what is residually construed as the "physical sphere", while cosmology places the person at the centre of an ordered universe of meaningful relationships, and provides guiding principles for human action *within* the sphere. Ingold further suggests that the global perspective dominates the Western sphere, while the spherical perspective is mainly pre-modern and non-Western (Ingold 1993, 41-42). Even though the association of these two perspectives with, respectively, the Western and the non-Western world, is not tenable, Ingold's observations are valuable for understanding transitions in Icelandic cosmologies. The dream theory of Helgi Pjeturss reflects a state in between the spherical and global perspectives. In Helgi Pjeturss' dream theory, the dreamer is not seen as acting in his or her own dreams, but the dreamer's own consciousness is suppressed, which creates the opportunity to merge with another mind. This seems to be a movement towards a global perspective and, at the same time, towards a psychoanalytical explanation that considers dreaming as a state in which the inhibi-

tory demands of wakefulness are diminished, and the effects of forgetting are reduced (Freud 1961, 438-48).

It should come as no surprise, then, that the dream theory of Helgi Pjeturss should be seen as an attempt to come to terms with the dramatic changes that occurred in Iceland at the end of the nineteenth century. In a brief period of time, the society was transformed from one largely dependent on agriculture, to an economy based on fishing. Iceland's settlement pattern changed drastically, when people moved from farms that lay scattered throughout the countryside, to villages, towns, and coastal settlements. Helgi Pjeturss' theory can be interpreted as an attempt to incorporate the rational perception of the world promoted by the modernisation of society, into traditional dream theory. Traditional dream theory postulates that knowledge is gained through a personal presence in a (physically extant) dream world. Helgi Pjeturss introduced the idea of the suppression of consciousness and the perception of other spheres from a distance, while keeping the traditional idea that dreaming makes it possible to cross spatial and temporal boundaries. Helgi Pjeturss' argument that the dream world is similar to the world that a spiritual mediator enters during a séance, implies this. The link between dreamers and mediators, on the one hand, and beings living on Earth or in space, on the other, is supposed to be telepathic. But the origin of dreams continues to be "out there", and not inside the dreamer's mind. Otherwise, a dream would be the conception of a dreamer, and not "life".

Helgi Pjeturss does not acknowledge Freud as the source of the idea of the suppression of consciousness in his theory on dreaming. On the contrary, he states quite boldly that dream theories such as those of Freud and Bergson could never have come into existence, if these scholars had paid adequate attention to their own dreams (Pjeturss 1919-1922, 461). Helgi Pjeturss presents one of his own dreams, to illustrate his point: He once dreamt that he climbed a mountain that he never had seen in waking life. Nevertheless, in his mind he had a collection of memories about the mountain and the landscape he saw. Although these memories disappeared quite quickly when he awoke, he concluded that this was the reason dreams cannot be creations of the dreamer himself. The presence of the collection of memories triggered by the dreaming perception, which is comparable to waking perception, proves for him that the landscape exists in reality (Pjeturss 1919-1922, 460-61). Helgi Pjeturss takes the dream experience as evidence for his dream theory. The same is done with the perspective on dreaming that is largely based on Freud's work. Here, however, there is an opposite result. The focus of this perspective on dreaming, which is dominant in the general discourse in many Western societies, is on discrepancies between dreaming and waking experience. These discrepancies are regarded as evidence that dreams are fantasies and delusions constructed by the dreaming mind, and derived from experiences in waking life, although dreams are diffuse in form and interwoven with fragments of the dreamer's memory.

The dream theory of Helgi Pjeturss should not be seen as indicating a transition from the traditional way of looking at dreams to a psychoanalytical perspective, in which dreams are interpreted as creations of a dreaming mind. In contemporary Iceland, the psychoanalytical perspective exists together with the dream theory of Helgi Pjeturss and traditional dream theory. Here, the links that Tim Ingold made between the global perspective and the Western modern world, on the one side, and the spherical perspective and the non-Western premodern world, on the other, are again refuted. My discussions in the previous chapters demonstrate that the idea of hidden, uncontrollable spheres that exist alongside, or are partly integrated into the consciously experienced world, did not vanish in Iceland because of the modernisation of its society. The modernisation of society did cause a change in the conceptions of the relationship between humans and hidden spheres, and of the nature of these spheres. Broadly speaking, two ideas became accepted. First, it was thought that scientific epistemology could both prove the existence of hidden spheres, and reveal them. Secondly, the disclosure of the hidden spheres might imply their vanishing. One way to secure their survival was to move these spheres to places not (yet) known.

The dead on the move

> In one of my conversations with the previously mentioned farmer, the following came up:
>
> Me: And you think that it is true, that when people die, they--
> The farmer interrupts me: Travel to other planets? Yes, I am very tempted to believe that . . . I find that much more natural than believing that this place will be somewhere up in the clouds, no one knows where . . . Neither heaven nor hell has been found, yet.
> Me: You don't believe in it, in a heaven?
> The farmer: No, I don't know where it would be . . . I find it much more natural that good men travel in a next life to good planets, and bad men to bad planets. That is much nicer . . . There are enough planets. More and more planets are found, nowadays. (m.t.)

Although the farmer told this in a humorous way, the idea that people move on to other planets after death is taken quite seriously by him, and in the teachings of Helgi Pjeturss. Helgi Pjeturss said that he was inspired by Plato, and writes in *Nýall*: "it is possible to account for the soul of a person who has died here on earth, being able to take on a body [present] on another planet" (Pjeturss 1919-1922, 17-18, m.t.).[3] Helgi Pjeturss died in 1949, but his ideas are found in

3 Dreaming about phenomena in the sky is often seen as an indication of impending death or problems in waking life. To mention some examples: A man dreamt about a

contemporary Iceland among members of the societies, *Félags áhugamanna um stjörnulíffræði* ("Association of people interested in astrology") and *Félag Nýalssinna* ("The society of Nyall-followers"). The members of *Félag Nýalssinna* publish the magazine, *Lífgeislar* ("Bioradiation"), to which the farmer has also contributed his dream accounts. Books are also published, such as *Furðuheimar draumanna* ("The Amazing World of Dreams"), written by Ingvar Agnarsson in 1993. The book discusses the idea that the dead continue to live on other planets. Ingvar writes: "When we look up at the stars on a very bright evening, we know that there is our future home" (Agnarsson 1993, 79).

Comparing this idea with my discussion, in chapter 5, of the spatial arrangements of the spheres of the living and of the dead, there are some interesting points to be noted. I illustrated that, along with the Christian notion of a unity with God, the dead can be present amongst the living, in the grave, and *hinum megin* ("on the other side"). It is the concept of hinum megin which, in the teachings of Helgi Pjeturss and his followers, becomes a specific geographic place, carefully separated from human life on Earth. In our conversations, the farmer put forth the idea that technology made it possible to discover parts of the world that were previously unknown. He said to me: "Heaven was first thought to be situated among the clouds, but we have discovered that this is not true. Everyone who flies in an airplane sees that it is not true." The discovery of the space among the clouds has not led to an abandonment of the idea that a world of the dead exists. The world of the dead is moved further away from the human world, to a realm still largely unknown by humans. This idea fits the concentric model of the Icelandic social universe, previously discussed, consisting of circles of decreasing familiarity, organised around a social centre. In the work of Helgi Pjeturss and his followers, the world of the dead is moved far away from the social centre: the world of the living.

The followers of *Nýall* interpret the existence of huldufólk in a similar way. In the above-mentioned book, *Furðuheimar draumanna*, Ingvar Agnarsson writes that he has dreamt the following about huldufólk: He dreamt that he was preparing to travel with a large group of people. Suddenly, they all have arrived at their destination. Ingvar found himself standing in a small, deep valley, with

---

rather high sunset on the eastern sky. The sun was bright as gold, although it was dark, because it was night. The dreamer was convinced that this refers to the death of a man living on a farm situated east of the place where the sun had set in his dream. In another dream, the same dreamer saw something that looked like a stripe of light or a planet, which moved from the east to the southwest in an arc. He thought this dream to be related to the death of his mother's the sister (ÞÞ 07243 61). A woman saw, in her dream, the sun shining in the middle of the night, which, as she argued, predicted the death of a child (ÞÞ 12661 61). A man claimed that dreaming of falling stars indicates the drowning of men at sea (ÞÞ 07080 61). A sunset just above the horizon is said to predict death (ÞÞ 07500 61, ÞÞ 07080 61), or, as one woman told me, problems for Iceland. During my fieldwork, another woman told me how, just before the beginning of the Second World War, her mother had dreamt of two suns in the sky.

huge rocks on both sides. He perceived a considerable number of residences in the rocks. Ingvar's mother was also present. They were on their way to visit certain people in one of these rocks. Someone led them inside in a very beautiful house. The atmosphere in the house made Ingvar feel very happy and blessed. This visit was followed by visits to other beautiful houses, also situated in rocks (Agnarsson 1993, 78-79).

Ingvar is convinced that the houses he saw in his dream are situated on other planets. The dream makes Ingvar wonder whether these houses could be similar to the houses that skyggn people perceive in the rocks in Iceland, and which they claim to be the residences of *álfar* and huldufólk (ibid.). According to Helgi Pjeturss' theory, dreamers are able to perceive these places because the activity of dreaming represses conscious thought, which makes telepathy possible. The huldufólk and álfar are thus draumgjafar.[4] Ingvar was confronted with the problem of why it is possible for skyggn Icelanders to perceive álfar and huldufólk while awake. He came to the conclusion that certain people have the ability to repress their thoughts in waking life, as otherwise happens when dreaming. He also adds that certain situations can lead to a repression of consciousness. Therefore, people can perceive huldufólk and álfar, even become one of them, in a way, while they are awake (ibid., 77-79).

Ingvar's reflections are a way of coming to terms with the Icelandic tradition of huldufólk, and the fact that the modernisation of Icelandic society has revealed spaces that were previously hidden. Developments in technology have made the Icelandic highlands accessible, a process by which the unknown and uncontrolled wild (to use the words of Hastrup, cf. Hastrup 1990, 276) came to be revealed, known, and under human control. As I illustrated in chapter 4, the huldufólk were mediators between unknown nature and human settlements. In contemporary society, the huldufólk partially lost their function as mediators between hidden and revealed spheres. As I argued, in present day Iceland the huldufólk are redefined and presented in a manner consistent with scientific epistemology. Through the involvement of skyggn people, the huldufólk's residences are mapped, and data on their lives studied and stored in a computer and communicated in an institutional context.

The strategy of the followers of Nýall for keeping the huldufólk and the dead alive is different. They moved the residences of the hidden beings, both huldufólk and the dead, to places still largely unknown and outside human control: other planets. Nevertheless, the methodology of the followers of Helgi Pjeturss is also analogous to scientific epistemology: their investigation of the world of the huldufólk and of the dead is based on collecting data (dream accounts), then sending this data to an institution, *Félag Nýalssinna*, where it is analysed, discussed in meetings, and published in magazines and books. The aim of the society is to answer two questions: *how* does contact between the inhabitants of the different worlds function, and *of what nature* are these worlds? This proves the

4 Pl. nom. of *draumgjafi*.

dominance of the modernist cosmology, based on scientific inquiry, in present day Iceland. The modernist cosmology has not overruled the traditional cosmology, but influenced it. It is here that the three elements of cosmology (ontology, epistemology, and ethics) prove their usefulness. In the theory of Helgi Pjeturss and his followers, a continuity can be traced in the ontological premises of the traditional cosmology, namely in the fundamental conception of hidden spheres existing alongside a consciously experienced world, while the epistemology and ethics have been subject to change.

The pastor: "This world where we live"

"Draum dreymdi mig," sagði Sankti Pétur
"Hvernig er þann látandi?" sagði Kristur.
"Að þú hefðir alla veröldina í þínum hnefa,
og varst kóngur kónganna og drottinn drottnanna
"Þig dreymdi rétt," sagði Kristur
"Hver sem segir þinn draum fyrri en sinn,
hans draumur skal þeim að sigri verða."
(Icelandic folk verse in Jónasson frá Hrafnagili 1934, 415)

["A dream I dreamt," St. Peter said.
"How does it go?" Christ said,
"That you had all the worlds in your fist,
and were the King of all Kings and the Lord of all Lords."
"You have dreamt rightly," Christ said,
"Everyone who tells your dream previous to his,
His dream would lead to victory." (m.t.)]

Figure 12. The churches Hrunakirkja (to the left) and Hrepphólakirkja in Hrunamanna-hreppur. The photo of Hrunakirkja is taken from Nálaraugað (The Eye of the Needle), a place where unmarried women could lay themselves down to sleep in order to dream about their coming husband. Photos: the author.

Eiríkur Jóhannsson is the pastor of the parishes of Hruna- and Hrepphólasókn, both of which belong to Hrunamannahreppur.[5] He was born and raised in a small settlement in the North of Iceland, and comes from a family of farmers and fishermen. At a young age, Eiríkur moved to a village of approximately four to five hundred inhabitants, where his mother began work at a bank, and his father as a blacksmith. As a child, Eiríkur often spent the summers at his grandmother's home in the countryside. He told me the following story about his grandmother:

> My grandmother was very religious . . . , but her belief was a mixture of several things. She was like that. She was not very concerned with huldufólk . . . , but there was a lot of spiritualism . . . I was born in 1960, and in 1956, the house where my grandparents lived was burned down . . . my great-grandfather . . . and an old man slept at the attic. In the middle of the day, the fire came, and they burned inside. I have always had the feeling that after this event . . . in the mourning process, and all that--there was a lot to do about it in the local society --that they visited . . . a spiritual mediator and they talked with this person, especially the women did . . . I have always thought that it was . . . for them, . . . a kind of mourning process. The pain vanished [in this way]. But it [the belief in spiritualism] was, for some unknown reason never a concern of mine, and I have never read something . . . It was just that the [Christian] belief had come to me, and therefore spiritualism never concerned me, [although] I heard much talk about it, and there were all kind of books. (m.t.)

For Eiríkur Jóhannsson, spiritualism and Christianity are mutually exclusive. He argues that he never became affected by spiritualism, because of his commitment to Christianity. He explains the attempts of his relatives to come into contact with the men who died so tragically as part of their mourning process. Icelandic pastors have not always seen spiritualism as contrary to the teachings of the Lutheran church. From 1945 to 1986, Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson was a pastor in the parishes of Hrunamannahreppur. He is known to several inhabitants of the area as a man with a keen interest in spiritualism. Some inhabitants told me how Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson organised so-called miðilsfundir, meetings at which a specialist is thought to establish contact with the dead. Others mentioned that the pastor loved to tell stories about *draugar* (the dead who return to the living), and that his own death had been revealed to him in dreams. Eiríkur Jóhannsson told me that Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson's interest in spiritu-

5 Eiríkur Jóhannsson has given me permission to publish parts of the interview I conducted with him, together with his name.

alism could be noticed in his sermons[6] and in conversations he had with him. Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson was not the only pastor with an interest in spiritualist matters. Many Icelandic Lutheran pastor were actively involved in the spiritualist movement.

The spiritualist movement

The spiritualist movement had important theological input. The movement entered Iceland via the followers of The Icelandic Unitarian Church in Canada. Einar G. Hjörleifsson, who later called himself Einar Kvaran, and Jón Hjaltalín, who translated the major religious works of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1722) into Icelandic, are the best known of the followers (Swatos and Loftur Gissurarson 1997, 57-61). A scientific approach to the world of the dead did not discourage Lutheran pastors from becoming involved in the movement. On the contrary, in 1919, 55 of the 443 members of the *Sálarrannsóknarfélag* ("Society for Psychical Research") were also members of the *Guðfræðifélag* ("Theological Society") (Pétursson 1990b, 59). But it was probably Haraldur Nielsson, professor of theology, who most influentially linked spiritualism and the Icelandic Lutheran church. Under his and Einar Kvaran's leadership, spiritualism became a popular movement, which assimilated the teachings of Christianity. Representatives of the Lutheran church saw spiritualism as a suitable answer to the growing gap between the teachings of the church and science. A scientific approach to religious issues was seen as bringing religion closer to the people again (Pétursson 1990a, 178-79).

Spiritualism incorporated not only Christianity and science, it also assimilated elements of folk belief, such as contact with the dead and the revelatory power ascribed to dreaming. These elements provided the necessary extension of ideas and practices previously important in Icelandic society during a period of dramatic social change. This continuity was largely constructed as part of contemporary political and socio-cultural processes. The way in which members of the spiritualist movement engaged with the dead and with dreams differed dramatically from the ways in which Icelanders had previously engaged with hidden spheres. A short book called *Draumar* ("Dreams"), written by Hermann Jónasson (1858-1923), a member of the *Alþingi*, Iceland's legislative assembly, serves as an example of this new approach. The book is based on a lecture which had been given by Hermann Jónasson about his own dreams in Reykjavík, in 1912. In chapter 5, I mentioned the dream account of Hermann Jónasson's encounter with a figure from the Icelandic saga, "Brennu-Njáls saga". The form and content of Hermann Jónasson's dream accounts are characteristic of other dream accounts of that time, and of previous centuries. But there are three

6 Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson died in 1996. I have asked his widow whether I might be allowed to visit her and study his sermons, but she found it emotionally too difficult to discuss these matters with me.

clear indications that dream sharing at the beginning of the twentieth century became positioned in a different context than had previously been the case. First, the dreams of Hermann Jónasson were submitted to a formal presentation, and not just shared in the context of everyday life. Secondly, two well-known Icelandic scholars at that time were involved in the publication of his dreams, among others the previously mentioned professor of theology, Haraldur Nielsson, and the Icelandic scholar, Guðmundur Finnbogason. Thirdly, a testimony appears at the end of the book, confirming that Hermann Jónasson speaks the truth. One of the objectives of the publication was to obtain scientific proof of the revelatory powershuldufólk of dreams, and to promote further scientific research on this topic. The following text, from the epilogue written by Guðmundur Finnbogason, is illuminating in this respect:

> Then I will thank the author for having finally removed 'the shell of silence', and for not refraining [from telling his experiences], nor showing fear of people's prejudices. He presented his special experiences to the public. I hope that this will encourage those men in this country who are endowed with special dream gifts. [I hope] that they will not let their dreams go to waste in the future, but instead feel obliged to give the most precise attention to their experiences, and pass their dreams on to those men who scientifically study these sides of the soul. *Draumspakir*[7] men have to adopt the rule of precisely writing down the dreams that they value as special, and that can foretell future events. Each time, a testimony should follow, confirming that the dream was written down [before the event happened]. In this way we may slowly gain evidence that is difficult to distrust, as often happens when dreams have not been confirmed before they come true . . . I, for my part, will be grateful if draumspakir men, or those who have received revelations in other ways, will tell me of their experiences . . . I will try to analyse their material, even though it [my work] will not be more than a stone in the cairn that men now are rising, in order to obtain insight into the world of sleep that encircles the wonderland of the soul. (Finnbogason in Jónasson 1912, 170-71, m.t.)

As this quotation demonstrates, the Icelandic academic environment--the theological one included--accepted that dreams had the potential to reveal future events. Otherwise, an investigation of this nature would not have attracted so

---

7 *Draumspakir* is the plural masculine nominative form of the adjective *draumspakur*, and means more or less the same thing as *berdreyminn*. *Spakur* refers to being *vitur*, having knowledge, while, as I mentioned before, berdreyminn refers to the ability to reveal hidden forces through dreaming, and is thus more associated with revelation than with knowledge. *Draumspakur* is, nowadays, considered to be a rather old fashioned word; berdreyminn is more common.

much interest. The aims of the scholars were to acquire scientific evidence of this dreaming ability, and to enhance an understanding of the processes that lay at its foundation. At the same time, the Icelandic scholars feared that the custom of sharing dreams that foretold future events would eventually vanish. Guðmundur Finnbogason speaks of prejudices which existed in society at that time, and could turn people away from sharing their dreams with others. It is hard to determine whether dream sharing at the beginning of the twentieth century was on its way to extinction, relative to previous periods. The available sources do not attest to a decrease in dream accounts, but the number of sources available differ from one period to the next. Additionally, people belonging to the well-educated Icelandic elite often defined folk belief as standing in opposition to the modern way of life. In their eyes, the modernisation of society included enlightenment through education. Old customs and habits were therefore bound to disappear, unless they could be defined as something other than superstition. If the existence of phenomena, such as predictive dreams, could be proven by scientific experiments, these phenomena could be redefined within the modernist cosmology. At the beginning of the twentieth century, elements of traditional Icelandic society were turned into subjects of detailed investigation by the Icelandic intellectual elite, who had taken on the task of defining the content of modern Icelandic culture.

The dreams of Jóhannes Jónsson (1871-1944), nicknamed *Drauma-Jói* ("Dreaming Jói"), were submitted to such scientific scrutiny. Jóhannes Jónsson was a farmer, who lived on Langanes in the Northeast of Iceland. His dreams concerned lost objects and sheep, which were common themes of dreams shared by Icelandic farmers in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Nevertheless, Jóhannes Jónsson's dreams were outstanding. He was known for his ability to dream "on request", and to answer questions posed while asleep. Jóhannes Jónsson is considered an even more profound dreamer than the above-mentioned Hermann Jónasson. Ágúst H. Bjarnason, professor of philosophy and psychology at the University of Iceland, wrote a preliminary report about Drauma-Jói for the Society for Psychical Research in London. His report awoke the interest of the members of this society, and they asked him to carry out further investigations. Ágúst Bjarnason therefore spent one month in the summer of 1914 collecting and verifying testimonies on the dreaming life of Drauma-Jói (Swatos and Loftur Gissurarson 1997, 199). In 1915, he published his results in a book called *Drauma-Jói. Sannar*[8] *sagnir af Jóhannesi Jónssyni frá Ásseli Tilraunir o.fl.* ("Drauma-Jói. True stories from Jóhannes Jónsson frá Ásseli Experiments etc."). Ágúst Bjarnason carried out several experiments with Drauma-Jói, and asked other people to do the same. He came to the following conclusions:

> For many years, especially [when he was] between twenty and thirty years of age, it seems that Jói was endowed with draumskyggnis-

8 *Berdreymi* is sometimes called *sanndreymi*, meaning dreaming the truth.

gáfa.9 Since then, and also since he married, his gift has decreased, although it has returned now and then . . . Since then, it gradually diminished, although it was present during the winter of 1908 and 1909, and during the summer and the autumn of 1913. Whether there is something left of it [of his gift] or not, and of what nature it has been, cannot be determined. It is impossible to affirm whether or not it still exists. Only when it becomes unambiguously visible again, and when experiments can be carried out with Jói, will we be able to arrive at a clarification. (Ágúst H. Bjarnason 1915, 202-03, m.t.)

Scientific investigation of the premonitory potential of dreams was, as the research of Águst H. Bjarnason indicates, not without problems. It seemed rather difficult to determine whether or not it was possible to dream about future events. However, dream sharing was not easily rejected as ingredient of modern Icelandic society, not least because some of the members of the spiritualist movement themselves confirmed having dreamt dreams that could be interpreted as revealing future events. In contrast to Jón Árnason, the nineteenth century folk tale collector who was rather sceptical of his research material (see chapter 1), the scholars of the early twentieth century who investigated dreams and contact with the dead did not necessarily distance themselves from their topics. There is, for example, a dream known to have been dreamt by the previously mentioned professor of theology, Haraldur Nielsson. This dream is said to have predicted the death of Bishop Þórhallur Bjarnarson (1855-1916), and is published in Oscar Clausen's book, *Draumspakir Islendingar*, of 1950. A short testimony, written by Sigríður Guðný Jónsdóttir, the daughter of Haraldur Nielsson's sister, follows the description of the dream and the related event, in a manner similar to that which Guðmundur Finnbogason recommended in the epilogue of Hermann Jónasson's book on dreams. Sigríður testifies that Haraldur Nielsson had told her of the dream before the event took place. She had even helped to interpret Haraldur Nielsson's dream, and afterwards investigated whether or not the bishop had indeed died. This proved to be the case (Clausen 1950, 193-95).

Many scholars who were involved in the spiritualist movement were interested in finding evidence of the revelatory power of dreams, and the continued existence of the dead. Generally speaking, they tried to attach a universal value to these kinds of phenomena, and did not aim to prove that these were special and unique elements of Icelandic cultural heritage. The scholars sought proof both at home and abroad, and were often members of international networks. However, there was an embedded national political message, which consisted of showing the outside world that Icelanders were advanced in the field of science, and that Iceland was a modern society. The conclusion reached by the authors of the book, *Icelandic Spiritualism*, that spiritualism was a way of coming to

9 *Draumskyggnisgáfa*: the gift of perceiving in dreams.

terms with modernity and change by both reaffirming and redefining elements of historical Iceland (Swatos and Gissurarsson, 1997) also seems valid with regard to the new light in which Icelandic dream sharing came to be viewed in academic circles. Although the approach and the context in which dreams were shared differed, the very basis of dream sharing stayed the same. The Icelandic scholars were undoubtedly familiar with new psychological approaches to dreams, to which the work of Helgi Pjetursson attests (Pjetursson 1919-1922, 461), but dreams were still considered gateways to other worlds, even according to theologians.

The 'messiness' of religious beliefs and practices

The involvement of theologians in the spiritualist movement was partly a reaction to events and processes which characterised Icelandic society in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Icelandic sociologist and theologian Pétur Pétursson has summed up the most important changes of this period:

> The relative and absolute decrease in the number of clergymen; socio-structural changes such as urbanisation, a more mobile labour market, followed by the desacralisation of social control, and the transposition of economic and social undertakings from being the responsibility of the clergy and the church; administrative differentiation, specialisation, and democratisation; the alienation of many intellectuals from the Church, which led to a desacralisation of the intellectual milieu. (Pétursson 1990a, 201, m.t.)

The integration of elements of folk belief, science, and Christianity was, to a large extent, a conscious attempt to address dramatic changes in society. But before these changes took place, elements of Christianity and folk belief were already integrated, at least among the common people. The role the Icelandic folk tales ascribed to Lutheran pastors illustrates this. Pastors were supposed to both establish a link between God and humans, and to protect the members of their parish against harm caused by huldufólk and other hidden beings. The following folk tale is an example of this:

> In Breiðavað in Eiðaþinghá, a woman was out late in the evening. The moon was shining, and she saw two men coming towards her farm. One of them pointed at her with the finger of his right hand. One of her eyes started to hurt, so she had to cover it with her hand. When she looked up again, she saw no one. She went inside, but when she entered the warmth of the room, a powerful pain came, so that she couldn't sleep at night. In the morning, her eye was black and swollen. She went out to Eiður, to Grímur the pastor, and she showed him the injury. He said that she had seen a *huldumaður* ["hidden man"] of the worst kind, and he went with her to the church, blessed

> the wine used at masses and dripped it in her eye; then the pain disappeared, and she was well afterwards. (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 40, m.t.)

The pastor not only has the ability to heal the woman, he also knows exactly who has caused the pain in her eye. This is a striking feature of pastors who appear in folk tales. They are, more often than not, able to explain how hidden powers are involved in events that happen in the human waking world (see, for example *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 22 and III, 62-64). The tales almost never raise the question of how the pastors have gained this insight, but several tales indicate that pastors are engaged in both worlds. A few tales, for example, involve pastors who are married to women of the huldufólk (see *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 51-52). Other tales indicate that, although the huldufólk had their own pastors, human pastors could serve as deputies and perform masses in the church of the huldufólk, and baptize their children (see *Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 54). The role of the pastors as mediators between the hidden and the human world was so clearly defined that their withdrawal from this hidden world was not accepted. A folk tale, again from the collection of Jón Árnason, deals with a pastor who denies the existence of huldufólk, but who is "converted" in the end:

> Once upon a time, a pastor named Einar lived at Prestbakki in Síða, in the province Skaftafellssýsla; he was wealthy and had many children. He spoke badly of huldufólk, and said that huldufólk had never existed. He challenged them to come and find him, and boasted of the fact that he had never met them. One night, he dreamt that a man came to his bed and spoke: "From now on, you shall never deny that huldufólk exist. I shall take your daughter, and you will never see her again. You have provoked us for a long time." The next morning, his oldest daughter had disappeared. She was twelve years old. She was looked for everywhere, but they couldn't find her. But when the children played at the *tún*, she joined the group and played with them. They wanted to bring her home, but she always disappeared. She said that she was treated very well, and that she owned many good things. Her father often dreamt of her, and she told him similar things and that she was given to a pastor's son, of the huldufólk. Time passed before she came again, and told him that she wanted to invite him to her wedding, on the next day. From that time forward, he never dreamt of her again. (*Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri* 1954-1961, I, 55, m.t.)

This folk tale comments on the preaching of some pastors against the belief in hidden spheres. In chapter 2, I discussed how Icelandic representatives of the church, already at the beginning of the seventeenth century, attempted to reject

the belief in hidden beings. The message this folk tale seems to contain is that folk belief and Lutheran religion should not be separated. Lutheran pastors have obligations to both human and hidden spheres.

The dealings of pastors with huldufólk or the dead can be seen as a confirmation that some pastors were indeed participants in the world where these cultural elements were constructed, passed on, and narrated. From 1850 to 1940, forty-five percent of all theological candidates came from farming families. This was a rather high percentage, compared to clergymen in the other Nordic countries (Pétursson 1990a, 39). The clergy's source of income was, until the beginning of the twentieth century, almost completely based on the farming economy (ibid., 44). This indicates that those who became pastors were raised in a society in which there existed the commonly-held idea that hidden spheres existed alongside the world that was experienced while awake. Pétur Pétursson argues that:

> . . . Elements of both belief systems were to be found in the world-view of the rural people, including some of the clergy. Their [the clergy's] task of supervising the religious and moral conduct of each household would have been an impossible undertaking, were they to have simply rejected the popular saga traditions and entertainments. Additionally, they would have gone against their own cultural backgrounds. This culture, as vividly expressed in the institution of the winter's eve, was composed of folklore beliefs, the saga tradition, and official religious orthodoxy. (ibid., 59)

Contemporary religion

Relations between visible living and hidden beings had been, so to speak, a matter of daily life, but the spiritualist movement removed these relations from their daily context, and submitted them to scientific experiments initiated and performed by closed circles of intellectuals. According to folk belief, all men and women could have encounters with hidden spheres, although some, like pastors, demonstrated more knowledge and proficiency in these dealings than did others. In spiritualist circles, a limited number of people were carefully selected to act as mediators between the visible and invisible spheres. For this reason, I suggest that the spiritualist movement was a significant step towards the dismantling, by intellectuals, of some elements of Icelandic folk belief, rather than a sign that belief in these elements had increased.

Nowadays, although people sometimes still speak of spiritualism as a separate movement, several of its elements are integrated into everyday life. Many Icelanders have visited and visit so-called "medium meetings" (see Haraldsson 1978, 148 and Arnaldsdóttir et al. 2007), and spiritualism has penetrated other movements, such as New Religious Movements and the societies that follow the teachings of the previously mentioned Helgi Pjeturss (Swatos and Gissurarson 1997, 228). However, as elements of spiritualism were integrated into society,

theologians and other members of the intellectual elite, who were initially the driving force behind the movement, withdrew. In contemporary Iceland, an increasing number of pastors strive to divide the domain of God from the world of hidden powers, in an attempt to dismantle the latter. It is no longer common for pastors to be members of Sálarrannsóknarfélagið, and stories like the one published in *Morgunblaðið* in 1997 about Reverend Gunnar Björnsson, in Holti in Önundarfjörður, who chased away a *draugur* from an old funeral car, are becoming rare. Many contemporary pastors define Christianity and their own role in opposition to folk belief and spiritualism. This process runs parallel with the incorporation of elements of the spiritualist movement in everyday life. Many Icelanders do not see a contradiction in burying their dead in a Christian way, and visiting a spiritual mediator afterwards, to make contact with the deceased although they know that pastors no longer consider themselves mediators between the living and the dead, at least not outside the rituals of the Church.

The preaching of the Lutheran clergy against the involvement of the living in the sphere of the dead is, for some Icelanders, difficult to accept. An extended quotation from a reader's letter entitled "Er trúfelsi staðreynd á Íslandi?" ("Is freedom of religion a reality in Iceland?"), published on December 2, 1999, in the newspaper, *Morgunblaðið*, demonstrates this:

> By Sigurður Lárusson.
> For the past eighteen months I have been in the hospital, and I have often listened to the church services on Sundays, whenever my condition allowed me to do so. I was raised with sermons read at home on holy days, and the psalms at Lent, until the radio came.
> On July 18, last summer, a pastor from outside the town held a service, and his preaching offended me very much. But because of my illness, I have not been able to respond until now. He spoke with imprudence of an acquaintance of mine. And why? He [my acquaintance] had written an article in support of spiritual mediators, which was published in the newspaper *Héráðsfréttablaðið*. I find that religious men, such as many pastors, particularly the younger ones, have a tendency to believe in the strict letter of the scriptures. It should not be like that . . . I am not ashamed to acknowledge that I share the opinion of my acquaintance. And I have my reasons. My acquaintance struggled for a long time with cancer, and the doctor said that he had little hope of saving his life. Then it crossed my mind to tell my acquaintance to contact Einar frá Einarsstöðum,[10] and to ask him to

10 During my fieldwork, I heard the name Einar frá Einarstöðum (1915-1987) several times, in conjunction with accounts of miraculous cures of serious diseases. Einar Jónsson was a farmer, living at Einarstaðir, in the North of Iceland. He claimed that discarnate entities assisted him in helping people (Swatos and Gissurarson 1997, 218). It was often enough to send him a letter, as the grandmother of one of my key informants

> help the patient to restore his health, if that were possible. A month later, the doctor did a blood test, and found no sign of cancer. A month after that, he sent the patient home, and said that, for the next year, he should come every month to Reykjavík to be tested. Of course, the patient did this. The following year his blood was tested every second month. And after that, he was tested once a year for the next fifteen years, and there was never one sign of cancer. Once, when the patient came for a blood test, the doctor said to his assistant: "This patient cured himself". What does the pastor say about this? I say this is a miracle. Do you think the age of miracles has passed? I know many of these examples, and some of them are equally convincing . . . (Lárusson, December 2, 1999, m.t.)

Sigurður Lárusson, the writer, states that he considers himself a Christian, and refers to the fact that he was raised with psalms and sermons. The last paragraph communicates the idea already promoted by the spiritualist movement, that the miracles mentioned in the Bible are of a similar kind to those visible in the work of spiritual mediators: The inexplicable cure of the cancer of the writer's acquaintance is a miracle. The spiritualist movement has been successful in combining folk belief, the Lutheran religion, and science, among some groups of Icelanders, at the same time that Icelandic pastors and the academic elite distanced themselves from these, in their eyes, non-Christian beliefs and practices. The current controversy between these groups centers primarily around the question of whether the living should actively engage with the world of the dead. Icelandic pastors cannot deny the existing interest in attending spiritual meetings, visiting *spákonur* ("seeresses") or spiritual healers, and the attention paid to dreams as a way of gaining knowledge of events happening at other places or times. They can, however, adopt a psychoanalytical approach to redefining these manifestations of folk belief as mental constructions, instead of evidence of external powers. The quotation of a part of my interview with the pastor, Eiríkur Jóhannsson, earlier in this chapter, already demonstrated this, but my interview with him contains more examples:

---

did. Her husband had a heart condition, and she wrote to Einar twice, asking him to keep her husband from dying. The third time she wrote, she asked him, should her husband die, whether his death could be calm and painless. Later on, her grandson dreamt three times about his grandfather. The first two times he dreamt that his grandfather was offered a lift, but his grandfather refused to enter the car. The third time, he dreamt that someone said: "I have tried twice to get him to come with me, but he doesn't want to". However, in the third dream the grandfather finally agreed to step into the car. Shortly after this dream, he died peacefully.

Me: Have you experienced yourself that you dreamt about something that happened later on (*dreymdi fyrir einhverju*)?[11]
Eiríkur: No, I have never had this experience.
Me: But you do dream, I suppose?
Eiríkur: Yes, it is said that all dream, but it varies. There was a time, many years ago, when I tried to remember my dreams, you know. I ask my daughters often: What did you dream last night? . . . to remember it while it's still fresh. My dreams are shortcuts, instead of being coherent. I rarely dream about people close to me. It is rare that my people, my family, are participants in my dreams.
Me: Do you mainly dream about people?
Eiríkur: No, yes, I think that there is some coherence with relations with people. I think so. I have never really thought about it. Not that I saw some landscape, or nature.
Me: Or clear dream symbols, or something like that?
Eiríkur: There was indeed a man today who told me that he had dreamt about a heavy sea . . . waves, up and down, such a symbolic dream. And I was indeed thinking: I have never dreamt something remarkable like that.
Me: How did this man interpret the dream?
Eiríkur: I interpreted it as referring to some kind of change . . . And he was going abroad, a long stay. It has perhaps been a thought, which has developed, you know.
Me: Yes, and you interpret your own dreams in this way? . . . related to something that happened the day before?
Eiríkur: I have always believed that dreams are a kind of result of processing [experiences] of the day before.
Me: So, rather psychological?
Eiríkur: Yes, I think so. That is my theory about dreams, that it is first and foremost like that . . . Yes, that it is the processing of something that has happened, and not an indication of something that is going to happen. (m.t.)

Eiríkur Jóhannsson wonders why he himself never dreams of such clear symbols as the man who dreamt about a heavy sea. He explains the dream as an expression of change in the man's life, not in the way that the dream leads to the change, but that the change leads to the dream. Eiríkur Jóhannsson seems not to be aware that the sea is a common dream symbol, shared especially among Icelandic fishermen and people in their environment. A dream about a wild sea is often explained as portending a rich catch. When, on the contrary, the sea is

11 *Að dreyma fyrir einhverju* means, as discussed in the Introduction, to dream "for" something or someone. The construction indicates that the dream dreamt relates to something or someone in waking life.

calm in the dream, the fishermen may risk returning to the shore empty-handed (see for example ÞÞ 07046 61, ÞÞ 06929 61, ÞÞ 06931 61, ÞÞ 07049 61, ÞÞ 07098 61, ÞÞ 07060 61, ÞÞ 07003 61).

It is interesting to note how Eiríkur Jóhannsson, in a psychoanalytical interpretation of dreams, has found a way to explain the sharing of dreams among people in his environment. He is able to avoid a confrontation with people whose ideas and practices express other cosmologies than the Christian one. He told me that he thinks that people in his parish avoid talking with him about dreams and contact with the dead, because they know his opinions. With regard to funerals and care of the soul, people sometimes mention to their pastor that they feel the presence of a deceased person, but Eiríkur Jóhannsson says that he sees this as an expression of the mourning process. There are times, however, when traditional dream sharing and contact with the dead come so close, that he cannot do otherwise than accept their importance to some people. As Eiríkur Jóhannsson recounts:

> Eiríkur: My wife is very interested in dreams . . .
> Me: And how does she interpret her dreams? . . .
> Eiríkur: Yes, for example, she says that it has been *að vitja nafns*, in a dream, [regarding] our youngest daughter . . . that was the reason she wanted to give our daughter the name she has. Because of að vitja nafns. . .
> Me: Was it a very clear dream?
> Eiríkur: Yes, it was a very clear dream. I know that she still remembers the dream. This is so common . . .
> Me: And how did you feel . . . How did you interpret it?
> Eiríkur: Whether it had been að vitja nafns, you mean?
> Me: Yes.
> Eiríkur: Yes, I myself do nothing with it. I mean, if she says it has been like that, then it is alright, you know. I mean, I myself have no distinct opinion on whether it has been so. For example, if one looks upon it, from [the point of view] of the Bible
> . . . , then there is the idea that one should not seek the dead. Then again, the Bible is of course full of dreams, symbols in dreams that show people the way, and things like that. Joseph was sought in dreams, and told how he should deal with Jesus. But then there is the question whether deceased people have the capability of coming into contact with us, whether in dreams or through some kind of medium. I have always been …, I mean, look, I don't condemn it, and I find it in itself strange, but it has never really touched me. I seek it in this world, where we are living. For example, the belief in Jesus Christ that we preach is first and foremost … the kingdom of God. We preach about the kingdom of God . . . and how it is connected to life today. Ninety percent of Jesus' words addresses life here and now,

> and perhaps ten percent is about some kind of an existence beyond . . . of which we do not have the knowledge to understand . . . If, for example we lived in the earth and talked about how it would be to live and look up to the sky, if we never had seen the sky, we would create all kind of images about how it might be, without knowing it. And the same goes for us . . . my sermons on the radio, are first and foremost Jesus Christ, who offers to take us to him. It is this man we have known through the gospel, this man who has given his life for us, as it is said, he will welcome us. Then, it is in his hands how existence will be. The only thing we know is that he will receive us lovingly, like his father. Everything else is hidden. (m.t.)

For Eiríkur Jóhannsson and for many of his colleagues, the world of the dead is the domain of God, and only God can take the initiative to reveal it. During the past decades, a development can be traced in the Lutheran church, whereby the godly domain becomes increasingly defined as unknowable and separate from everyday life. In practice, this idea is expressed through the introduction of more rituals in church services. This can be partly seen as a reaction to the attempts of the spiritualist movement to submit the world of the dead (and thus, the domain of God) to scientific experiments, which Eiríkur Jóhannsson considers objectionable. As the above-discussed letter by Sigurður Lárusson in *Morgunblaðið* also illustrates, many pastor are opposed to an involvement in dealings with the world of the dead. But as elements of the spiritualist movement are integrated, and the idea that each Icelander has access to hidden spheres is widespread, the increase in rituals and the insistence on the concealed nature of God's realm receive criticism from the parishioners.

The presumptions of pastors with regard to dreams, including those involving contact with the dead, indicate that dealings with the godly domain are organised differently than dealings with other hidden spheres. It is not only in the epistemology, but also in the ethics, the prescription for how people should, ideally, relate to the hidden world, that the difference lies. According to the discourse that is discussed in the previous chapters, the relationship between dreamer and hidden agent is characterised by exchange. If one acts according to the social rules of the hidden spheres, one can gain knowledge and find directions for waking life, or even better one's situation. According to modern clergy and theologians, the asymmetry that is always present in relations between living Icelanders and hidden beings is taken to the extreme. The relationship between God and men is, above all, one of uncertainty. One can pray to God, but one cannot force him to listen.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Icelandic pastors and theologians attempted to surmount the growing gap between the church and science by making God's realm subject to scientific investigation, at least to some degree. Nowadays, this professional group seems to think that an investigation and disclosure of this realm will endanger its existence. Their strategy is to sharpen of

the division between the waking, consciously experienced world and the hidden spheres controlled by God, through a mystification of these spheres. It should be stressed that this is not uniquely modern, but reflects earlier theological discussions, as found in the work of Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas distanced himself from the earlier scholastics, Eriugena and Anselmus, who attempted to gain insight in the domain of Christian dogmatism through reason (Störig 1990, 231-32).

These recent developments in the theology of the church of Iceland clash with the assumption (discussed in chapter 5) that relations between the living and the dead are necessary for the continuation of society and the "becoming of persons". For many parishioners, the preaching of the younger generation of pastors against involvement with the dead is a direct threat not only to society, but also to being. In a different way, this recent confirmation of the concealed nature of the godly realm moves Christian cosmology further away from the modernist cosmology, which presupposes that hidden parts of the world eventually will become revealed.

I will now discuss the modernist cosmology, by presenting, among other things, the views on dreaming and the dreams of a young Icelandic computer scientist.

The computer scientist and the large sample

Í draumi komstu
Í draumi komstu nú í nótt til mín,
og náttkjóll var hið eina sem þú barst
Ég leit þig hrifinn eins og ædri sýn,
svo engilbjört og mjallahvít þú varst

Af enni þér og æskuljósri kinn
svo undarlega hvítum bjarma sló
sem töfrar gripið hefðu huga minn.
--Ég held að þetta viti á meiri snjó.
(Guðmundur Ingi Kristjánsson 1993)

[In a dream you came
In a dream you came to me now this night
And only a nightgown you wore
You were bright as an angel and milk white
I looked at you, enchanted as if by a higher vision
From your head and your youthful cheeks
So wonderful, the white glance hits
As magic it has grasped my thoughts
--I think this points to more snow
(m.t.)]

Draumráðningar

Ef þig dreymir að maríubjalla
skríði út úr ermi hægri handar
þá muntu hitta mann með höfuð
úr grænmeti og þrjá teninga í maganum
Ef þig dreymir að ananas syngi
á turni hallar með fjögur kopar-
brjóst þá mun eldur brjótast út
í bókastaflanum og tuttuguogþrír menn farast

Ef þig dreymir að lásbogi segi
nafn sitt þá mun máltækið "Betri
eru tvær konur að dansa en dreka-
fluga í brúarsmíði" verða skrifað
á bak þitt
Ef þig dreymir þungan hermann þá
muntu brátt komast að leyndardómi
glersins.
(Sjón (Sigurjón B. Sigurðsson) 1986
in Sveinsdóttir 1992, 53)

[Dream interpretations
If you dream that a lady bug
crawls out of your right sleeve
then you will meet a man with a head
made of vegetables and three dice in his stomach
If you dream that a pineapple sings
in a tower of a palace with four copper
breasts, then fire will break out
in the book-stacks, and twenty-three men will perish.

If you dream that a crossbow says
its name, then the expression: “Better to have
two women dancing than a dragonfly
building a bridge” will be written
on your back.
If you dream about a heavy soldier, then
you will soon find out the secret
of the glass.
(m.t.)]

Although these two poems approach the revelatory power ascribed to dreaming in a humorous and satirical way, their creators assume that the public is fa-

miliar with the idea that dreaming can reveal future events, and with the meaning of certain dream symbols. In order to understand the first poem, one must know that the colour white is often interpreted as forecasting snow. The humorous effect is evoked by contrasting a rather stilted description of a romantic dream image, with the everyday issue of a weather condition normally predicted in dreams by white sheep or light-coloured horses. The second poem comes from a book that introduces Icelandic literature to children. Dream accounts are frequently used in Icelandic literature, and it is therefore no surprise that part II of this educative book is dedicated to dreams. The authors explain what dreams are: "Dreams derive from those parts of the soul of which we are not aware, namely, the unconscious. The function of dreams is to mediate between our inner self and the reality in which we live during our waking life." (Sveinsdóttir 1992, 36) Then, the authors turn to traditional dream sharing, which, according to them, belongs to pre-modern Iceland. They refer to the fact that Icelanders, in the past, like people from other societies, have ascribed predictive powers to dreams. They refer to the many dreams found in the Icelandic sagas and present several examples of dream accounts in modern Icelandic literature, as rhetorical devices (ibid., 36-39).

Traditional dream sharing is least visible among people with a higher education. Icelandic schools promote the scientific epistemology, combined with Christian values. Some Icelanders told me that they lost faith in their dreams at the time they became students, in high school or university. One of them is Garðar Guðgeirsson, a computer scientist whom I met when I was a guest scholar at Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, the Árni Magnússon Institute, in Reykjavík in 1999. From the very first moment that I explained to Garðar the focus of my research, he was very sceptical. When I looked something up in one of the books on dreams available at the institute, he often said to me in an ironic tone: "Yes, every Icelander believes that." I invited him to talk with me about his view on dreaming. I asked him, among other things, whether he himself could remember some of his dreams, which was a good starting point for him to express his thoughts on the subject. This is an extended extract from one of our conversations:

> Garðar: Yes, I have two examples. This was before I started to study natural science. At that time, I believed in such things, in *berdreymi*, things like that . . . For example, when I was very, very little, I dreamt, that--I was at the countryside at my maternal grandparents . . . that a car came, and drove on the road . . . It is a long road that leads to the farm, perhaps about one hundred, two hundred meters [in waking life]. I dreamt that a car came and drove, as said, onto the road to the farm, and then up to the tún. This was really strange, because cars normally stopped next to the farm. And . . . probably because I have such an interest in cars, I have always remembered this. So, a few months later, precisely this happened [in waking life]. A car was sto-

len, the thief fled, and he reached the tún. And I thought: Yes! My dream predicted this, 'cool, man. Yes!!'[12] And 'O.K.', then I went on to study mathematics and natural science, and then I thought: 'O.K.', my dream referred to this, and I found it a bit strange. Therefore, I remembered it. Because . . . after I had dreamt something *spes*[13] . . . it took an incredibly long time [before the dream came true]. Is it then so unlikely that someone would drive to the tún?
Me: Perhaps . . . if you wait long enough.
Garðar: Precisely! Precisely! Look, this is exactly the case. The case is that one longs so very much to believe it. Therefore, it is very likely that something will happen, something which one can relate to the dream. It is precisely on this basis that dream interpretation books often work, because they give such vague descriptions about what is going to happen . . .
The other one [he refers to the other dream about which he had promised to tell me]. When I was in high school, I dreamt that I had lost some teeth. And that means . . . this is what I read--this means some bad luck, something bad is going to happen. And shortly after, someone broke into my fine cars, and the grey one was stolen, and I thought: Hell, man, my dream predicted this! And again, along the same lines, I mean, the car was parked outside the garage and . . . break-ins were common . . .
Me: You looked it up in a dream interpretation book?
Garðar: Yes.
Me: To see what the symbol meant?
Garðar: . . . Yes, I did. I was about eighteen or so.
Me: Before you went to the university?
Garðar: . . . I have stopped slowly [believing in the revealing power of dreams]. There was no "turning point".
Me: 'O.K.', there has been no reason? It happened--
Garðar interrupts: It just happened a bit at a time.
Me: 'O.K.', but you think that it is connected to your study? That you started to learn--
Garðar (interrupts): It can also be the other way around. That the reason that I started to study . . . , I went to study engineering, there is a lot of mathematics involved, natural science, it is such an exact subject, is the same reason that I stopped believing in dream interpretation . . . It is just the type of person I am. (m.t.)

---

12 The words in single quotation marks are English words Garðar and I used when speaking Icelandic. It is quite common for young Icelanders to include English words in their Icelandic.

13 *Spes* is an Icelandicism and abbreviation of the English "special", and means "strange" or "out of the ordinary".

Garðar experiences a contradiction between believing in the revelatory powershuldufólk of dreams and endorsing the assumptions on which science is based: "that a phenomenal world exists, that it is important to investigate it, and that it is possible to investigate it" (Parman 1991, 91). Garðar does not hold his university education responsible for his losing his belief in dreams. He is convinced that there are just certain types of people who are attracted to a certain kind of knowledge tradition. His type perceives the world as consisting of objects or phenomena that can be submitted to scientific investigation. Phenomena that do not obey the rules of science are not of interest to Garðar:

> Garðar: Look, Icelanders--as you know of course, because you are studying this--have such a strong belief in everything that is supernatural . . . Do I have to say: "Álfar don't exist", or something like that? It is just the case that I have no interest in whether or not they exist. What I am interested in is how it works, whether they exist . . . I don't attach value to whether it is real or not, but more, if it is real, then I want to know: Why? And look, I want valid arguments, and not something like: "álfar showed themselves when this person did this". I want to know instead: Why do we normally not see álfar, if they are there? . . . So, in most cases, I just don't pay attention [to stories of dreams or huldufólk], because there is no one who can show me an *álfur*, there is no one who can repeat . . . an experiment showing an álfur . . . There is no one who can show me: when I dream this, then this will happen. Therefore, I have no interest. Should someone be able to show me [the revelatory power of dreams and huldufólk] in a verifiably scientific way, such as "exact science", I would totally freak out.
> Me: So you want to have some kind of "proof"?
> Garðar: I am interested in proof, and I am not interested in information such as: "I have dreamt about that and then this happened". Only if experiments have been done one hundred times do we approach something like a large enough sample size. Then I will start to become interested. (m.t.)

Garðar follows the approach of the spiritualist movement, arguing that predictive dreams and huldufólk should be submitted to scientific experiments. A large enough sample size is necessary to prove their existence. The sample size should illustrate a frequent occurrence of a correlation between a specific dream experience and a specific waking event. For example, dreaming of the colour white should, on each occasion, be followed by snow in waking life, and, of course within a certain acceptable period of time. The scientific methodology that Garðar would like to apply to the investigation of hidden spheres implies homogenisation and quantification of what is potentially qualitatively different

(Hobart 1993, 6). The question is, how to homogenize and quantify waking events and dream experiences, inaccessible as dream experiences are? For example, how does one ensure that the occurrence of the colour white in one dream experience appears equally in a next dream experience? Cognitive scientists state that the building blocks (i.e. the particular bits and pieces of memory, knowledge, feeling etc.), which, according to scientific study, form the dream experience, are not, and possibly never could be controlled in order to perform experiments (Cavallero and Foulkes 1993, 134). The validity of traditional Icelandic dream sharing should be sought elsewhere. Let us take a closer look at how exactly dreams are shared, and what kind of knowledge is generated through the narration and interpretation of dreams.

I regularly visited an elderly Icelandic couple. On Saturday, July 7, 2001, the woman told me that her son recently had dreamt about his grandmother. She was named Sigríður, and had died many years before. In the dream, his grandmother was wearing the Icelandic folk costume. She was very happy, and had mentioned the number twenty-five. More was not said about the content of the dream. In the meantime, some relatives dropped by for a visit, and the dream account was repeated, so that they too could give their opinion. The female guest thought that the dream meant that we could expect rain until July 25. But our host said that this could not be a valid explanation, because the weather forecast had promised beautiful weather the whole week. His wife said that her son, the dreamer himself, thought that he had either twenty-five years, twenty-five months, twenty-five weeks, or twenty-five hours of his life left. She disagreed with her son's interpretation of the dream, and argued instead that it was a very good sign that his grandmother had been so happy in the dream. And, she continued, it is very positive to dream about the name Sigríður (according to Icelandic dream language, the name is associated with the word *sigur*, "victory"). To emphasize that her interpretation was the right one, she told us that her deceased great-grandmother appeared once in one of her own dreams. Her great-grandmother was also smiling and wearing an Icelandic folk costume. The following day, in waking life, the phone rang and she was told that the very good friend and aunt of her great-grandmother had died. This was, therefore, the explanation of the dream. I did not immediately understand why this dream was supposed to be positive, and asked her why her great-grandmother had been so happy in the dream, when someone was going to die. She answered that the woman who died had suffered so much; her death had been a great relief.

The dream account consists of four clear symbols: the number twenty-five, the name Sigríður, the appearance of the deceased grandmother, and the Icelandic folk costume. These symbols and the different ways in which they can be combined gave rise to a variety of interpretations. Numbers are generally interpreted as standing for the length of time of a certain event or phenomenon, or for the time a person has left in his or her life. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the appearance of the dead is thought to indicate that they have a message for the living. But it might also be a sign that the deceased in question is

seeking a living person to guide him or her to hinum megin. The latter would suggest a negative meaning, already ambiguously present in the number twenty-five. The name Sigríður points, however, in the opposite direction. The name's reference to victory is seen as a good sign. The Icelandic folk costume supports this positive interpretation, because the costume is often worn at national festivities and joyful rituals, such as weddings.

When analysing this example of dream sharing, the following can be concluded: The dream interpreters share the assumption that dreams contain potential knowledge about different places and times. Consensus exists, at least to some degree, regarding which elements of dream accounts are carriers of meaning. The selection of the above-mentioned dream symbols is firmly rooted in a shared (but always changing) body of knowledge. On the basis of this body of knowledge, their experiences and of readings of the social and natural environment, the participants put forward an interpretation that relates the dream account to an event in waking life. The following step is that one of the participants tries to convince the others of a certain interpretation. In this particular situation, the mother of the dreamer is most convincing. She supports her interpretation by referring to a similar dream she has dreamt, which also had a positive outcome. What exactly this positive outcome can be for her son, she does not say. The mother seems to feel the need to reject the negative explanation given by her son, of his coming death. The dream account has enough potential to provide a positive interpretation. She ignores the belief that the dead can return to the living, to take them to hinum megin, and focuses instead on the image of a cheerful deceased person, which can be an indication of a positive message. It is often accepted that only time can show which dream interpretation is the right one, depending on how life unfolds. But normally, attention is drawn towards waking events that can confirm the dominant interpretation. Should the outcome of the negotiation of meaning be more specific than in this example, or the dream account less ambiguous, people may act directly on the basis of the interpretation, without waiting for the event the dream is supposed to predict.

This example illustrates that the expected repetition of an assumed "causal" relationship between a dream image and a waking event is central to Icelandic traditional dream sharing. A "causal" relationship is often established on the basis of experience, as the following example, told to me by an Icelandic anthropology student, demonstrates:

> Student: Some years ago, I dreamt that I was in the countryside . . . , and I dreamt such a strange dream. Later on, I was told that she [her sister's daughter, of whom she had dreamt] was pregnant. Later, I again dreamt a similar dream, but then [the dream dealt with] my sister's other daughter. I said to her, just for fun, that my dream suggested that she was pregnant, as well . . . But she wasn't pregnant . . .
> Me: She wasn't pregnant?
> Student: Yes, one of my sister's daughters.

Me: But not the other?
Student: No . . . I found it very funny, I don't believe it very much [she refers to the predictive power of dreams].
Me: How did you dream that she was pregnant?
Student: Look, I dreamt we were in the countryside, . . . and I dreamt, that some boy from where she worked wanted only to talk with her, and not with me . . . Like that, and when I heard she was pregnant, I said: Ah, now I understand [laughs].
Me: Yes [I laugh, too].
Student: And then I dreamt a similar dream later on, about, as said, the other, her sister, then I thought: Yes, now you are also pregnant.
Me: Yes, it was a similar symbol.
Student: Yes, precisely. I am not *berdreyminn*, because it was certain that she wasn't pregnant. (m.t.)

Dream accounts that are said to indicate pregnancy are quite common in contemporary Iceland. The idea that dreaming about a boy talking to a girl indicates pregnancy is, on the contrary, not a shared dream symbol. The student tests her dream against waking life. Had the second dream also been followed by a pregnancy, she would probably have adopted the image of a boy talking to a girl as her personal symbol for pregnancy. Once the student has added the symbol to her personal dream lore, she can choose to share the symbol with others. If she is convincing enough, it might become adopted by people in her social environment. In this case, it so happened that her sister's other daughter was not pregnant. The student concluded that she was not *berdreymin*, and the hypothetical relationship between the dream and the waking event was rejected. Thus, new symbols may be added to the already existing body of shared dream symbols, in the search for a causal relation between a dream image and a waking event. Hypotheses about possible links between dream images and waking events are tested, and adopted or rejected. I encountered several people who had the tendency to adopt a dream symbol, even when a certain dream image was followed by a similar event on only two occasions.

There are both similarities and differences between the way knowledge is generated through dreaming, and through scientific methodology. Both epistemologies are rooted in a search for causal relationships. Michael Young, inspired by David Hume, argues that the relationship between cause and effect is rooted in "habit and its extension, custom--the tendency we all have, in greater or lesser measure, to do again what we have done before" (Young 1988, 75). The key element of habit is recurrence, containing a cyclic element. Young makes the important remark that these cyclic elements are not "time locked", but "sequence locked". As he puts it: they are "entrained not by the sun, but by the recognition of a situation . . . as similar to a situation encountered before" (ibid., 79). This is certainly the case, in traditional dream sharing.

But the two epistemologies differ both with regard to the demand for uniformity of the phenomena investigated, and the demand for the frequency with which the relationship between two phenomena must recur, to justify the assumption of a causal relation. The large sample size that Garðar would like to see differs from the expectation that, on the basis of two instances of a waking event following a certain dream image, a relationship between the two can be assumed. The expectation relates to the ontological assumption, that hidden spheres "out there" are directly related to the world experienced while awake, is persistent in Icelandic society. Hume and Young ascribe a universal and psychological value to custom. Hume has stated that custom is a principle of human nature, universally acknowledged and well-known in its effects (Hume in Young 1988, 96). The principle of custom may be fundamental to humans, but it is not universal for people to expect dream images to be followed by certain waking events. On the contrary, some think that waking events are followed by (evoke) certain dream images. The force of custom is interrelated with cultural expectations regarding the possibility that a relationship exists between two entities, and with established ideas suggesting the direction in which the causal relationship goes.

The difference between the epistemology of dream sharing and of scientific method should not be sought in the fact that the first is socially embedded, and the latter is of an objective nature. Scholars such as Bruno Latour (1979), Stanley Tambiah (1990), Pierre Bourdieu (1991), and Tim Ingold (2000) have all noted the social embeddedness of science. Tambiah, for example, infers from the work of Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, and Imre Lakatos, that:

> . . . Modern science as a process of knowledge-making has a double axis, a vertical dimension and a horizontal dimension . . . The vertical axis is theoretical and philosophical, and is part of science's internal structure. It consists of the rules of logic and research operations, the rules of the game, and the methodology by which observations are tested against the objective "reality out there." The horizontal axis is the scientific community at large, itself subdivided into specialisms and subcommunities with their distinctive problems and paradigms . . . the scientific community to which the scientist belongs is . . . the social body that writes and enforces the rules of the game. (Tambiah 1990, 140-42)

The dream sharing epistemology differs from the scientific epistemology, discussed here by Tambiah, in that it does not seek to transcend its social embeddedness. On the contrary, the selection of the right interpretation of a dream depends on its integration into social life. As I have illustrated, the smallest entity that both contains and generates knowledge in traditional dream sharing is the (often multivocal) symbol. The dream account is interpreted in correspondence to readings of the social and natural environment, and to the personal

background, (shared) knowledge and assumptions, and experience of the participants. Dream accounts generate situation and locality-specific information, while scientific epistemology consists of a search for knowledge that is universally valid. As van der Ploeg argues: "Legitimation is [in case of local knowledge] not sought in the construction of laws [as in the case of scientific knowledge], but in the coincidence with perspectives and interests, which again are perceived as part of the locality" (van der Ploeg 1993, 210). It is not that dreaming about the colour white is directly linked to snow coming. Sometimes it is, but in other situations, it is supposed to refer to a letter which the dreamer will receive, or to a dry period. The coincidence with perspectives and interests, but also with random situations that occur in waking life are decisive for the interpretation. However, because each symbol has only a limited number of meanings ascribed to it, and (new) symbols are subject to negotiation, people are restrained from using dream accounts freely, to achieve certain aims.

In Icelandic daily life, the locality-specific and socially embedded knowledge that is expressed and generated by dream sharing is easily combined with the universal knowledge that science attempts to obtain. In the situation described earlier, where a dream was shared, which involved the deceased grandmother, called Sigríður, and the number twenty-five, coming rain was rejected as a possible interpretation of the dream. The argument was considered weak, because it was only based on the number twenty-five, and the other symbols did not indicate that the dream was a "weather dream". The reason given for rejecting this interpretation was that the weather forecast, based on scientific observations, forecast that beautiful weather was on its way. Science is generally seen as a valid system of knowledge, and therefore a convincing argument. This same man may not always prefer a forecast based on scientific observation, over a weather prediction based on his dreams. On some occasions, he will value his dreams more than the weather forecast on the radio. Again, it is the coincidence of perspectives, interests, and situations that is of importance. It is only possible to guess at the man's motivation for emphasizing the truth of the weather report. He most likely sought to support his wife's positive interpretation, by rejecting the likelihood that the dream might refer to weather conditions.

Thus, Icelanders use different cosmologies to explain the world around them, without the use of one cosmology necessarily implying the denial of the other. People who normally support the perspective that dreams are creations of the mind can easily switch to an understanding of dreams as being capable of revealing hidden causal relationships between events. This change can be triggered by the dreaming of certain images that have a shared meaning, such as the appearance of a deceased person in a dream, or by experiencing something that is rationally inexplicable. An example of the latter derives from one of my conversations with a mother and her three children. At the age of two, her eldest son was often frightened while asleep and half awake. He seemed to see something or someone that his parents could not see. After having tried, without success, to find the source of the boy's nightmares in his mind, with the help of a

psychologist, his mother began to ascribe to the nightmares a revelatory character. She associated it with the fact that they had only recently had moved into the house in which they lived, and that someone might be present, whom they could not see, but that their son could (Heijnen 2001, 56). Many Icelanders pay attention to the dreams they dream on their first night in a new house, in order to determine whether the house (and the spirits of the people who have lived there before) is kindly disposed or hostile with regard to the new inhabitants. People who instead emphasize a psychological dream theory also pay attention to the dreams dreamt during the first night at a new place, but would see these dreams as being the expression of their own feelings, evoked by the new situation.

It should be noted that, although science is generally recognised in Icelandic society as a valid way of exploring the natural world, and people easily switch from a psychological perspective to the idea that dreams reveal knowledge about the world "out there", psychological interpretations are rarely utilised by people who are convinced that the activity of dreaming is a way to cross spatial and temporal boundaries. In an unpublished master's thesis on contemporary spiritualism in Iceland, Rannveig Lárusdóttir Reumert writes that one of her Icelandic informants was shocked when, during psychotherapy, she was told that her dreams might be a mirror of her inner self, rather than messages from hidden powers (Lárusdóttir Reumert 2001, 26). This does not mean that the dreamer's emotions are excluded from traditional dream sharing. On the contrary, as discussed in chapter 6, feelings are increasingly present in the sharing of dreams in daily conversations, especially among women. In addition to the images, the feeling the dream evokes in the dreamer is thought to indicate whether a given dream means something positive or negative for the future.

The dream scientist

Kristján Frímann is an Icelander who deserves attention in my discussion of different perspectives on dreaming and the dream. He calls himself *draumfræðingur* ("dream scientist"), and his perspective on dreams is communicated in the media. For many years, Kristján Frímann has had a column in *Morgunblaðið*, one of Iceland's main newspapers, where he discusses and interprets dream accounts that people send to him. Another dream forum by him is found in the magazine *Nýir tímar* ("New Times"). But Kristján also has his own radio program on dreams, is the author of the book *Draumar. Fortíð þín, nútíð og framtíð* ("Dreams. Your past, present and future") and he developed a website, in Icelandic and English, which is called *Draumaland* or "Dreamland". The following text, found on the English website, introduces what the site is all about:

> In dreamland you can learn about dreams, the myths, signs and symbols. You can have your personal dream interpreted

You can view and download various types of KK[14] Art Screen Savers
You can have a website made for you
You can buy your favourite picture for your CD cover,
a postcard or to use as wallpaper
There is a lot more you can do at dreamland.is
http://www.dreamland.is is a world of its own.

There is also a price list on the website. It costs $20 for the interpretation of one dream and $30 for two to three dreams. The English version and the prices in dollars indicate that the site is aimed at an international market.

To confirm the importance of dreams to Icelandic people, in his work Kristján Frímann refers to dream accounts in the Icelandic sagas, and to Icelandic folk belief. However, his interpretations of the dreams sent to him combine Icelandic dream theory with the approaches of Freud and Adler, and, especially, of Jung. In his book, *Draumar. Fortíð þín, nútíð og framtíð*, he writes, for example: "Some of the most important symbols in dream dictionaries, such as a house, fire, a landscape, an animal, and travel, have a common ground, they are archetypes, examples of common experiences that have been inherited" (Frímann 1991, 87). Kristján Frímann also finds inspiration in the dream accounts of the Bible. Foreign dream theory dominates his work, which is illustrated in the way Kristján Frímann explains the meaning of the symbol of "water", on his website:

> The form of water if it's a lake, spring, river, or the sea is a metaphoric of the soul as a self-being.
> The sea connects the dreamer to his early childhood and birth, lakes take the dreamer to significant moments in the dreamer's life and the moment 'now' . . .
> The water dream is a dream of inspiration, to seek new frontiers in life, new ideas, new thinking . . .(http://www.dreamland.is)

Kristján Frímann's interpretation of the symbolism of water does not correspond to what many Icelanders told me. Among the 552 dream symbols and their meanings, which I collected in order to analyse the degree to which symbols and meanings are shared in Icelandic society, thirteen different dreamers mentioned the symbol of water twenty-one times. On fifteen occasions the dream interpreters claimed that the symbol of water predicts illness, and on four occasions, that it predicts death. Two persons referred to a more general meaning. They explained that dreaming of water is a bad sign, but were not more precise. A common belief is that the deeper or dirtier the water, the more serious the illness will be. The image of a person disappearing under the surface, with-

14 KK refers to Kristján Kristjánsson, an artist who often illustrates Kristján Frímann's work on dreams.

out coming up again, is seen as an indication of death. Likewise, when one dreams about someone who is situated in water, and absolutely refuses to come out. Thus, while for Kristján the symbol of water connects the Self with the past (the sea), the present (the lake), and the future (water in general), the common Icelandic dream interpretation explains water in relation to the "other", the person who has appeared in the dream, and whom the dreamer sees touching the water.

The difference between these two perspectives also came up during a conversation with an Icelandic farmer, whom I regularly visited. He asked me whether I knew Kristján Frímann, who writes about dreams in *Morgunblaðið*. After I had confirmed that I did, he said: "He, Kristján, says that a dream about a house gives insight in how one's soul is doing." Kristján has often elaborated in his articles on dreams about the symbolism of the house, and argues that if the paint of a house is flaking, or if the house is generally in a bad state, this means that the dreamer's soul, or sometimes his or her body, is in bad shape (Frímann 1991, 93-100). The farmer referred to this interpretation, and said to me that he had never before heard so much nonsense. Later on, he told me that he had dreamt about a house. The house had been quaking. The farmer was therefore convinced that we could expect an earthquake. The idea that the quaking house might refer to the state of his own body or mind was unthinkable to him.

Kristján Frímann also has an answer for the ever-important image of the dead appearing in a dream. He discusses a dream which was sent to him, and deals with a deceased woman who rings at the dreamer's door. According to him, the dream indicates the dreamer's fear of chaos. The traditional Icelandic dream interpretation would say that this dead woman is trying to contact the dreamer.[15] Kristján Frímann mainly interprets dream images as having the potential to reveal personal sides of the dreamer. As we saw in the previous chapter, many Icelanders interpret the appearance of both living and dead persons in dreams as the dream having a meaning for these persons. According to this interpretation, not only the dream account, but also the dream experience is social. Kristján Frímann's dream interpretation suggests that the world with which one comes in contact while dreaming is not a hidden sphere "out there". On the contrary, the "hidden sphere" is a person's inner world, the subconscious, which has the potential to inform dreamers about the state of their bodies and their souls. Kristján Frímann follows a psychological approach, when he states that the persons the dreamer meets are creations of the dreamer's mind, and can be interpreted as sides or feelings of the dreamer's self.

Kristján Frímann interprets the dream accounts that Icelanders send him in an alternative way, but his writings show that he is familiar with the symbols

15 Compare, for example the dream "Kisu" in *Kristsdraumur* (Frímann 1999), with the interpretation of the dream about the deceased grandmother, discussed in the section titled *The computer scientist and the large sample*.

that are part of traditional dream theory. He seems to intentionally rewrite the Icelandic dream language, by introducing new symbols and by giving already accepted symbols, such as horse, cattle, and raven, new meanings. In chapter 3, I mentioned that dreaming about a raven is commonly interpreted as foretelling the death of a person in the dreamer's social environment. Kristján Frímann writes in his book *Draumar. Fortíð þín, nútíð og framtíð*: " . . . although many see the raven as a bad omen, it is nevertheless the symbol of luck." In his next sentence, he introduces new dream symbols, the canary and the pigeon: "Canaries foretell good luck and fortune, and pigeons represent children" (Frímann 1991, 154, m.t.). On the next page, he introduces an alternative meaning for horses, which, according to common Icelandic dream interpretation, foretell weather conditions or, like ravens, death (see chapter 3). Kristján says that, on the contrary "Horses, just like snakes, have a sexual association in dreams, but are most often a symbol of inner strength and the energy to tackle problems" (ibid., 155).

These dissimilar perspectives on dreaming are related to different contexts of narrating dreams and to different objectives. According to traditional dream sharing, the best dream interpreters are people who are not only knowledgeable, but who also are engaged in the social life of the dreamer. Kristján Frímann, on the other hand, deals with isolated dream accounts. When the distance increases between participants in dream sharing, it is hard to maintain a practice of dream sharing, where waking and dreaming experience are interconnected. The only information Kristján Frímann receives by post or internet from dreamers is their dream accounts. He often does not know the age, social background, or profession of the dreamer. When a dreamer has dreamt about the sun setting in the east (commonly seen as indicating death), Kristján Frímann cannot know whether the dreamer has a neighbour in the east who perhaps is ill. This "disembeddedness" asks for an approach in which dream symbols receive a more general meaning, possible to apply to all kinds of people living in all kinds of places. Kristján Frímann's attempts to reformulate certain dream symbols, such as the horse and the raven, and to add new symbols, such as the canary and the pigeon, should probably be understood in light of his commercial intentions and lack of social engagement. It is difficult to communicate negative messages of death, as symbolised by horses and ravens, through the media.

Kristján Frímann does not reject traditional Icelandic dream sharing, but uses it to legitimize both his dealings with dreams and his title of dream scientist. By highlighting his own Icelandicness and by referring to old sources that show that Icelanders have used dreams for many centuries, he legitimizes his proficiency in dream interpretation. In practice, he rarely uses the available Icelandic dream theory. It is possible to say that Kristján Frímann's work presents a tension between local and universal knowledge, which is a characteristic of New Age thought. Piers Vitebsky writes the following about the knowledge processed and regenerated in New Age circles:

> . . . It is both local and universal. It is derived from exotic local systems set elsewhere in time and space . . . It is then relocalised here and now, but on a global scale and with global aims. Stripped of its specific, non-portable local elements like ancestor-worship, it has become a new sort of world religion . . . The new knowledge, too, is subject to commoditisation, and appropriation. But because this knowledge has local origins, somewhere, this process of appropriation has a new twist. It can remain knowledge even while its original knowers can be declared to have lost the competence to know it. Now the natives need to be re-educated in their own forms of knowledge by those who have become better custodians of it... Through the lifestyle press, the relationship of people to this knowledge, too, becomes a form of consumerism. This consumerism extends not just to knowledge as a commodity, but also to wisdom: one might suppose that the information explosion could have no corresponding "wisdom explosion". But the ultimate expression of this tendency is to see even wisdom as a commodity which can be concentrated, distilled and transfused during weekend workshops in self-realisation. (Vitebsky 1993, 110)

Several of the aspects Vitebsky mentions are illustrative of the ways dreams are used in New Age circles in Iceland. Another person working in this tradition is Valgerður Bjarnadóttir, a social counsellor in Akureyri, who has many years of experience teaching courses on dreams. I talked with Valgerður Bjarnadóttir several times, and she invited me to make a presentation on the findings of my research at one of her courses, which I did. This also gave me the opportunity to participate in her courses on dreams. Valgerður Bjarnadóttir's inspiration derives not only from the Icelandic practice of dream sharing, but from her master's studies in Women's Spirituality, at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. In one of Iceland's main newspapers, *Morgunblaðið*, on August 1, 1997, the journalist Susanna Svavarsdóttir interviewed Valgerður Bjarnadóttir about a course she was teaching at that time, which had dreams, myths, and lost values as its main topics. The journalist begins her story by saying that, owing to technological developments, Icelanders have lost the dreams that were their blood (Svavarsdóttir 1997). In other words, the original keepers of the knowledge of how to dream and interpret a dream--in this case, the Icelandic people--are thought to have lost this competence. Through workshops and courses, they could be re-taught their own cultural heritage (Heijnen 2002).

But despite this stated objective, Valgerður Bjarnadóttir and Kristján Frímann are not reproducing Icelandic dream interpretation. Their expertise derives to a great extent from foreign discourses. This invention is necessary, because of a tension between their intent to teach a lost cultural heritage, and the fact that the socially-embedded knowledge, which characterizes this cultural heritage, does not fit the modern context of national and international work-

shops, courses, and the internet. In these contexts, only "universal" knowledge is valid. This is one of the reasons why dream symbols, the meanings of which are generated within a certain locality, are reinterpreted. Symbols are ascribed new meanings of a more general character, relating to the self, rather than to the other. The psychoanalytical dream language, especially that inspired by Jung, conveniently suits this objective. In their teachings, Kristján Frímann and Valgerður Bjarnadóttir communicate that the crossing of spatial and temporal boundaries is not thought to function through social engagement with hidden spheres, but through the inherent spiritual qualities of the self. The unconscious is viewed in New Age circles as the connection between human and divine consciousness (Hanegraaff 1996, 218). This assumption is perhaps most clearly represented in the work of Jung, where spirituality appears to be an intrinsic property of the deeper dynamics of the psyche (see Hanegraaff 1996, 496, for a discussion on relationships between the work of Jung and New Age movements).

But dreams are not only redefined in their symbolic content and epistemology, as already mentioned; the ways in which dreams are communicated and interpreted within "New Age" circles also differs from traditional dream sharing. Traditional dream sharing often unfolds as dialogue, whereby the listener interrupts the dream narrator, and proposes one or more of several interpretations, often in the form of "this image stands for that", and by drawing in various aspects of the life of the dreamer. At her courses, Valgerður Bjarnadóttir encourages dreamers to recount and interpret their own dreams, and to note the feelings evoked by their dream. She also attempts to stop others present from interrupting this process. Valgerður Bjarnadóttir told me that the other participants, whose only task is to listen, have difficulty restraining themselves from interrupting the dream narration with their interpretations, as they are used to different ways of communicating. After the dreamer has recounted and interpreted his or her dream, others are invited to express their feelings and thoughts about the dream. This form of communication and interpretation dreams is related to the idea that the dream only has a meaning for the dreamer, and not for others. Highly significant is that this process of personalizing the dream leads to a less frequent communication of dream accounts, because dreamers are made aware that they are communicating personal, rather than social knowledge.

Another important aspect of this form of communication is power, associated with skill and expertise. Kristján Frímann and Valgerður Bjarnadóttir present themselves as experts in their fields. Kristján Frímann uses his position, together with the widespread idea that dreams are capable of revealing causal relations and hidden spheres, to communicate political messages on a national level. An example of this is Kristján Frímann's interpretation of a dream sent to him by a man called Einar. Kristján Frímann interprets the dream as a strong political statement against Iceland's participation in the European Union. Because of the length of the dream account, I only present here a part of the interpretation given by Kristján Frímann:

> . . . and the dream image gets shape. An image that shows that this dream is a prediction and a warning against coming danger. Danger that touches us all, and not just you, Einar, although you are the dreamer. You travel to the past, because that is how you felt, but at the same time you are in the present, and try to set foot in the near future. The environment and the pier inform us about the land: Iceland, between East and West. The clothes refer to the past, and they are symbols of ancient times and primitivism . . . You notice that something bad is approaching, and you try to tear yourself loose. A grey dirt comes over you, almost impossible to remove. In other words, you are knocked down, in the same direction as others. You become will-less and gray, marked, dependent, without the right of self-determination. This dream is a strong warning against a bond with the new union, which now arises in Europe, and is called the EU. It foretells the arrival of a Big Brother, who strips all of honour and belief, of the will to achieve, of independence and the right to self-determination. It covers you in a gray mould, poisoned as he himself is. (Frímann 1995, 17, m.t.)

The message of this dream interpretation cannot be missed. Kristján Frímann has, in the various media, such as newspapers, magazines, the radio, the Internet, and books, a powerful means for altering and constructing dream theories, in order to achieve political aims. Dream accounts that are disembedded from their local context can be made into national political messages with, for example, the aim of improving the position of women in Icelandic society, promoting Christianity, or claiming to protect the Icelandic nation against dominance of the European Union. The increased distance between dream narrator and public, and the sharp division between the role of dream narrator and the role of dream interpreter, represented in the work of Kristján Frímann, mean that a dream does not receive a meaning through face-to-face negotiation. Professional dream interpreters are free to invent and reinvent dream symbols, because knowledge is removed from dense social networks and placed into the hands of a few specialists. This necessarily involves a hierarchical relationship. Because the message communicated is not based on shared symbols, as is the case with traditional dream sharing, the knowledge communicated by the dream interpreter is only considered legitimate when the dream interpreter is ascribed the role of specialist.

Dream theories and cosmologies

The dream theories and practices that I presented in this chapter and in previous chapters reflect the coexistence of four different types of cosmologies in Iceland, which I designate with the analytical terms traditional, modernist, Christian and post-modern. The traditional cosmology presupposes that, along-

side the world experienced by the waking consciousness, hidden temporal and spatial spheres exist. The world is thus supposed to consist of different spheres, where persons are positioned vis-à-vis other beings, human and non-human. The spheres are integrated and interdependent, and boundaries are by no means absolute, but can be crossed. Knowledge is acquired through the movement of the body and soul, or soul alone, to these spheres, and engagement with the beings living there, but a certain detachment is also seen as necessary, in order to be able to return to the living, waking world. Thus, in this view, the activity of dreaming is a means that enables the movement and circulation of beings, qualities, essence, knowledge, and objects between the spheres. The spheres are social, in the sense that living beings inhabit them. In addition, a good relationship between living humans and these beings is thought to be essential for gaining knowledge, the "becoming of persons", and the continuity of society in general.

The modernist cosmology rests on the assumption that the world contains known and unknown parts. The unknown parts are potentially subject to human control and scientific investigation, because natural laws are thought to be their basis. Dreaming is considered a mental process, universal to all humans. Knowledge can be gained through dreaming, but this knowledge is subjective, and relates only to the subconscious. Dreaming does not disclose processes and phenomena in the world, neither does it generate objective knowledge. The dreaming mind is thought to dwell in an isolated, non-social universe (e.g. see Freud 1961 and Foucault 1986 for various interpretations of this).

The Christian cosmology supports the existence of unknown and unknowable hidden spheres, but they are defined as the domain of God. The godly domain is thought to influence the world of the living, but is outside human control. Interaction with the domain can lead to knowledge, or one might better say, to revelation, but this knowledge is not based on moving to the domain (except in the case of the dead), as in the traditional cosmology. The living can try to personally engage with God, but, nowadays the Lutheran Church prefers ritual involvement with representations of the godly domain. This view necessarily implies a sharp border between the godly domain and the hidden sphere, and with the human world. Dreams can originate from God--the Bible attests to this--but because the godly domain is unknowable and inaccessible, and dreams can also derive from evil powers, a cautious approach to dream interpretation is demanded.

The post-modern cosmology, described by Zygmunt Bauman as the re-enchantment of the world (Bauman 1993, 33), is a hybridisation of elements from the Christian, traditional, and modernist cosmologies. In Icelandic New Age circles, for example, the scientific epistemology is articulated, while the subconscious has been ascribed a spiritual dimension. Owing to the inherent spiritual qualities of the self, dreaming provides knowledge regarding the self (including bodily conditions) and divine knowledge. Intense engagement with, and investigation of the self are supposed to enhance the understanding of hidden spiritual elements of the world. The post-modern cosmology and the tradi-

tional cosmology both imply a holistic perspective in which the self is seen as being related to other entities in the world.

I will now contextualize my findings in relation to the studies on Icelandic cosmology that I previously discussed, mainly in chapter 3. To recall the most important points: Gurevich argues that the *Weltmodell* of the ancient Scandinavians was holistic, characterised by an inseparable bond between humans and nature. He also finds a fundamental distinction between *innangarðs* ("inside the fence") and *útangarðs* ("outside the fence") (Gurevich 1969, 43), noting that the ancient Scandinavian Weltmodell is horizontally structured. A vertical structure, which is also present in the mythological sources, is, according to Gurevich, the result of later foreign influences, namely the introduction of Christianity to Icelandic society in the year 999 or 1000 (ibid., 43-47). Kirsten Hastrup's concern, in her 1981 article, *Cosmology and Society in Medieval Iceland*, is to bring order to the apparently chaotic picture of the Old Norse gods and heroes, and to discuss the concept of world view. As does Gurevich, she identifies a spatial distinction between "inside" and "outside", reflecting a fundamental distinction--a deep structure--within the Icelandic conceptualisation of the world. A world view is, in her opinion, a mediator between such deep structures and surface levels of reality. It is "a system of classifications which relates to the entire 'world', rendering its parts meaningful and internally coherent, because of its position as a transformer between separate levels of reality" (Hastrup 1981, 74-75). Hastrup finds, as does Gurevich, a horizontal and a vertical axis in the world view of medieval Iceland. The horizontal structure is characterised by a constant cosmological order and a focus is on the permanence of the world. The vertical structure is characterised by irreversibility and the transitory nature of man. In contrast to Gurevich, Hastrup does not interpret the presence of the vertical structure as a result of the introduction of Christianity to Icelandic society. The vertical and horizontal structures are both inherent to the cosmological model. The vertical structure already present in the Icelandic world view only facilitated the integration of Christianity into Icelandic society. Hastrup suggests that the horizontal structure separating "inside" from "outside", the "familiar" from the "foreign", has persisted down through the centuries (and one would expect the same of the vertical model representing the structure of Christianity) (ibid., 68-69). Hastrup's work attests to this, as she applies, for example, the opposite categories of "inside" and "outside" to analyse gender relations in modern Iceland (Hastrup 1990a, 269-82).

Turning to modern Iceland, we encounter Darryl Wieland's work on mystical power. Wieland's focus is on the development of classes as the result of the modernisation of Icelandic society and the rise of class-related world views. Wieland states that Icelanders' views of the world are differentiated into sometimes competing, sometimes complementary paradigms. He defines a paradigm as:

> . . . a culturally determined screen of the basic things and processes in the world through which members of society perceive, think about, speak of, give value to, and coordinate meaningful action . . . A paradigm is employed by an actor as a unique, individual perspective, but is not, primarily, a characteristic of 'the individual' or its personality; rather it is something largely learned from and shared with others. (Wieland 1989, 19-20)

Wieland finds three coexisting paradigms in modern Iceland, and states that:

> . . . behind each [paradigm] lie distinct, contradictory, absolute presuppositions about humankind and nature. The folk-historical [paradigm] presupposes the existence of nonpatent, mystical powers in man, nature, and God. Mystical powers are not fully known or knowable . . . The theological paradigm also posits the existence of mystical power in God, and in humankind and nature, yet mystical agency is by definition not known or knowable, the things and processes in the world are accountable to divine or human action, and events are willed. Further, the mystical powers of persons are fully defined by and reside in the exercise of the orthodox rites of the church. The modern, middle-class paradigm presupposes the exclusive existence of known or knowable (i.e. rule-governed) things and processes in the world; forces may be hidden but are part of a complex system of causation subject to human discovery and control. (ibid., 20-21)

Wieland further writes that, while these paradigms coexist and interact, they are not fully synthesised, and Icelanders experience them as mutually contradictory (ibid., 35).

The studies of Gurevich, Hastrup, and Wieland differ profoundly. Gurevich stresses the holistic nature of the old Scandinavian world view; nature, culture, past, present and future, human, half-human and non-human beings, the living and the dead were all interrelated. A change in world view is, according to him, caused by external influences, such as the introduction of Christianity. Hastrup, on the contrary, is able to detect a smooth incorporation of a foreign structure into the comprehensive Icelandic model of the world. As I previously mentioned, Hastrup suggests that this is the reason why beings that were horizontally related to living humans, such as giants, elves and trolls, could survive even in modern society, while the gods disappeared. The horizontal structure remained the same. If this presupposition of hers had proved to be right, her theory would have had the potential to help us understand why certain cosmological ideas are so persistent, even after the modernisation of Icelandic society. As indicated before, there are several problems with Hastrup's theory. First, her model does not address the question of why *huldufolk* are still present in Icelandic society, while trolls and giants, whose domain is also horizontally related

to the world of visible humans, have vanished. Secondly, society's acceptance of Christianity and scientific epistemology have clearly influenced the horizontal structure, as I illustrated in chapter 3, with regard to changes in the concept of *fylgja*. Thirdly, after the modernisation of society, the world's hidden spheres became defined as being of a similar nature as those parts of the world that scientists attempted to disclose (see my discussion of the work of Helgi Pjeturss in this chapter). With the acceptance of the scientific epistemology, the idea developed that horizontally-related spheres could be revealed vertically.

While Hastrup also stresses the continuity of a single comprehensive model of the world in modern times (Hastrup 1990), Wieland argues that the various paradigms arose in Iceland because of the modernisation of society (Wieland 1989, 28). The distribution of the modern middle-class paradigm and the paradigm derived from folk history is seen by Wieland as class related, while the theological paradigm tends to cut across several classes. Wieland adds the important remark that, in principle, every Icelander has access to each paradigm (ibid., 35-37).

Starting from the work of these three authors, my argument is that, since the institution of Christianity established itself firmly in Iceland, two different cosmologies, the traditional and the Christian, can be traced in Icelandic society. My discussion of the written sources in chapter 2 presents evidence of this. With the modernisation of Icelandic society, the modernist cosmology arose, later joined by a post-modern cosmology, while the traditional and Christian cosmologies continued to exist. The traditional cosmology implies a holistic structure, as Gurevich argues for the Old Scandinavian Weltmodell, where the world consists of different, but integrated spheres. My investigations indicate that the traditional cosmology has persisted from the settlement period until today, an argument similar to that of Hastrup, but I add that this cosmology has been subject to change. My discussion of animal images and of fylgjur in particular, in chapter 3, clearly indicate that, over time, the division between nature and culture became profound. I also support the argument put forth by Wieland, that different paradigms arose because of the modernisation of society, although I argue that four cosmologies can be found instead of three. Wieland, having done fieldwork in the 1980s, asserts a continuity between the traditional and the post-modern cosmologies, while I detect clear epistemological and structural differences between the two.

The question remains: How do the four cosmologies, being analytical categories, relate to Icelandic daily practice? How do they relate to the ways of thinking and acting upon dreams, as I have presented them so far? A division along class lines does not altogether hold. As I stated, some Icelanders with a higher education and/or position in society only articulate the traditional cosmology in the private sphere, and when a situation asks for such an interpretation. People with less education and a lower social status, or people who work in traditional domains, such as agriculture and the fisheries, will more openly share their dreams. However, in Icelandic society we encounter the same situa-

tion as Steven F. Kruger noted of the Middle Ages, that the same social groups, and even the same individuals are drawn to, and, at the same time back away from a belief in the predictive significance of dreams (Kruger 1992, 15). My argument is, therefore, that manifestations of the four cosmologies are frequently present in the same person, and interact on the basis of their qualitative differences.

I have mentioned several cases of how different dream theories are intertwined in daily practice. Icelandic Lutheran pastors, for example, move away from the idea that dreams can be messages from God or from the dead, and apply instead a psychoanalytical model that explains dreaming as a universal activity caused by mental processes. They stress the modernist idea that images of the dead do not reflect real entities, but are mental constructions that arise to deal with problems, insecurities, and suffering. Another example I presented is of the little boy who was often frightened while half asleep. His mother initially sought a psychological explanation for his fear, but when this did not work, she moved towards the traditional cosmology that acknowledges the presence of hidden agents. Chapter 5 also addresses the fact that the traditional and post-modern cosmologies can supplement one another. The post-modern cosmology has clear relations with the traditional cosmology, in the sense that they both stress a holistic understanding of the world, and the existence of spiritual powers. The dream scientist advocates the idea that dreaming can provide knowledge about future events, which the traditional cosmology also assumes is possible. For the former, the source of knowledge is, however, the self, and the entangling of the self in the world.

The above could resemble Wieland's argument that, in principle, every Icelander has access to each of the three paradigms that he believes exist in Iceland. Also, Michael Herzfeld's argument, that cosmology is a rich source of imagery and argumentation that individuals and groups can creatively mine, as they search for explanations and justifications of their activities, seems to make sense (Herzfeld 2001, 193). But this is only partly true, and I intend to discuss these arguments more specifically. The image of individuals creatively mining cosmologies is, in my opinion, too simplistic, because it does not explain why Rannveig Lárusdóttir Reumert's contributor was shocked when, during a psychoanalytical session, she was told that her dreams might be a mirror of her inner self, rather than messages from hidden powers. Neither does it provide us with an explanation of why it is not uncommon for people who endorse a psychoanalytical explanation of their dreams to change to the traditional dream theory. And why does the pastor not know that the dream image of a heavy sea is usually seen as indicating an uncommonly rich catch? Furthermore, what is the reason that the farmer finds Kristján Frímann's idea, that a quaking house is a reflection of the self, and not the indication of an earthquake, ridiculous?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to view each cosmology as having its own internal forces of reproduction and its own history. The work of Fredrik Barth on the generation of cosmologies is significant in this respect. In his book,

Cosmologies in the Making, of 1987, Barth discusses the varieties of cosmological ideas and expressions among different cognate and contiguous Mountain Ok communities in New Guinea. The starting point of his book is the empirical observation that, while the various Ok communities share economic and environmental conditions, their religious practices and beliefs vary dramatically (Barth 1987, 1-3). Barth's aim is not to analyse deep structure (ibid., 46), nor does he define cosmologies as bounded entities. He sees the cosmology of the Mountain Ok as essentially providing a web of concepts, connections, and identities, whereby their attitudes and orientation to the various parts of the world are directed and moulded (ibid., 72). For Barth, knowledge is crucial for understanding cosmology. He claims that knowledge has three facets or aspects, which are interconnected, and mutually determine one another:

> First, any tradition of knowledge contains a corpus of substantive assertions and ideas about aspects of the world. Secondly, it must be instantiated and communicated in one or several media as a series of partial representations in the form of words, concrete symbols, pointing gestures, actions. And thirdly, it will be distributed, communicated, employed and transmitted within a series of instituted social relations. (Barth 2002, 3)

According to Barth, these three facets of knowledge help to "demonstrate how already established thoughts, representations, and social relations to a considerable extent configure and filter our individual human experience of the world around us and thereby generate culturally diverse worldviews" (ibid., 20). My application of Barth's work does not imply that I ignore the importance of social change and cultural variation initiated by external forces. As I argued, dramatic changes, such as the introduction of Christianity and the modernisation of Icelandic society, which were outcomes of both endogenous and exogenous processes, generated different cosmologies. I also want to stress that the relationship between cosmology and practice does not unfold in a one-way direction. However, Barth's work is significant in its understanding of the forces of continuity and invention, and the distributive and generative powers of each cosmology.

Icelandic cosmologies and Barth's three facets of knowledge

The aim here is to discuss how the three facets of knowledge appear in the four cosmologies that I detected in the different perspectives towards dreams, discussed in this chapter. To begin with the traditional cosmology, the main substantive assertion is that this cosmology consists of the idea that hidden spheres exist alongside the sphere experienced while awake, and that these spheres are interdependent. In the previous chapters, I presented several examples demonstrating that actions undertaken by the living while awake were thought to influence the hidden spheres, and vice versa. Nowadays, this idea is

most clearly expressed with regard to relations between the living and the dead. These relations are of an asymmetrical nature. The dead have knowledge that the living seek, as well as the power to disconcert the living. But relations between the living and the dead are also characterised by engagement and negotiation. Engagement and negotiation return as important aspects of the social organisation of the living, among whom the traditional cosmology is found. Traditional dream sharing is most clearly present at localities where social networks are dense. Dreams are shared between family members, between friends, and between inhabitants of sparsely populated areas, such as Hrunamannahreppur, with seven hundred and fifty inhabitants in an area of two hundred and fifty square kilometres. Here, networks of friends, colleagues, teammates, parents, teachers, medical personnel, of buyers and sellers, often overlap. In these dense networks, it is often helpful to have a third actor commenting on actions and situations, and revealing hidden or, otherwise unutterable knowledge. This third actor is sometimes clearly defined as a deceased person, but can also be represented by a general dream image. The social organisation of the living, and of the living and the dead as a group, generates traditional dream sharing and cosmology.

The idea that the dead and the living, and the spheres in which they live are integrated, demands a means of communication. I have illustrated that dreaming fulfils this role. This leads to Barth's second facet of knowledge: Dreams, as remembered upon waking, must be "instantiated and communicated in one or several media as a series of partial representations in the form of words, concrete symbols, pointing gestures and actions" (Barth 2002, 3). Dream images are translated into cultural dream accounts. These accounts can be narratives, but also drawings or paintings. The accounts contain symbols that are often shared between dream tellers and their public. Dreams that, because of certain features, are recognised as meaningful enough to share are often ascribed an external origin. They therefore represent true knowledge, and are shared on the basis that the interpretation, not the dream, can be wrong. Communication of dream accounts normally takes the form of face-to-face discussions, telephone conversations, or the exchange of e-mail between people who are engaged in each other's lives. This quest for personal involvement is further visible in the occurrence of people dreaming of events that do not relate to their own waking life, but to the lives of others. Personal involvement directs the meaning given to the dream, and stresses the social embeddedness of the activity of dream sharing. The negotiation of meaning between equal[16] partners is central to traditional dream sharing.

But the fact that people share dreams with others they know also has another reason. The strong influence of the modernist cosmology has removed the tradi-

16 Here, "equal" is used in contrast to dream sharing in the post-modern discourse, which is often characterised by the exchange of dreams between a specialist in dream interpretation and a dream communicator.

tional cosmology from the official discourse. People who support traditional dream theory have a tendency to discuss their dreams only with others who share this dream theory, in order to avoid criticism. The sharing of dreams between the "like-minded" reproduces the cosmology, because no external threats can be expected, but it also constrains the distribution of both dream theory and its underlying cosmology in domains where other dream theories are supported. Women, for example, often do not tell their dreams to their husbands or boyfriends, whom they know will reject the idea that dreams can reveal coming events. They often prefer to phone their mother or tell a girlfriend instead, who share their ideas. When people find someone who also supports traditional dream theory, whether or not this is a listening anthropologist, it leads to a high concentration of dream sharing. Dream accounts and knowledge which have long been kept silent, might in these cases be expressed. For example, a friend of mine, who uses his dreams to direct and motivate his actions, suddenly began to share his dreams more intensively, when he started to share an apartment with a man who was also interested in dreams, and interpreted them in a similar way. Another example is the situation in which the pastor is not aware that the symbol of a heavy sea means a rich catch, according to traditional dream language. People know that he does not support the traditional cosmology, and will therefore not readily tell him those of their dreams which they think indicate future events, or are evidence of the presence of the dead. As Barth writes: "the distribution of the items of knowledge and ideas on the interacting parties in a population is a major feature of the organisation of that body" (Barth 1987, 77).

This rather "safe" sharing of dreams does not mean that the dream lore is completely reproduced every time a dream is shared. Barth, again, draws our attention to the force of creativity in the generation of (religious) knowledge (ibid., 78-79). The possibility for creative input is actually quite overwhelming, when it comes to dream sharing. First, the creative force of dream experiences gives rise to the exploration of new symbols. Secondly, the above-mentioned time interval between situations in which dreams are shared can lead to some previously-accepted symbols being forgotten, and replaced by new ones. Thirdly, the fact that dreams (and sometimes the same dream) are shared between different people in different contexts creates the opportunity to add new personal symbols to the already existing dream lore. Fourthly, the egalitarian ideology in Icelandic society is responsible for the acceptance of the idea that every Icelander is allowed to engage with hidden spheres, and can use knowledge gained there to direct or motivate social action. Fifthly, the unpredictable sides of life, which always demand considering one's life in relation to the "facts of the world", ascribe to dream sharing the important function of adjusting the self to (the coming) reality. Sixthly, the constant search to improve dream interpretation, and the lack of dogmatic rules concerning dream interpretation, make foreign input easily acceptable and applicable.

The force of creativity is so substantial that the degree of coherence and consistency, which is clearly found in traditional dream sharing in Iceland, cannot

be taken for granted. The coherence and consistency should be seen in the light of social organisation--dream lore is laid down in dense social networks of the "like-minded"--and of cosmological assumptions regarding, for example, the significant relations between the living and the dead. Also, the simple need to communicate counteracts the creative force of dreaming, to which the clear narrative structure, discussed in chapters 3 and 5, attests. In Icelandic society, where written language is a prominent part of national identity, what is considered to be of importance is also set down in writing. One often finds, in the introduction to books on dream accounts and their interpretation, that authors explain the motivation behind their decision to publish dreams by underlining their clarity or the importance of the events they have predicted. These written dream accounts form fixed points of reference for interpreting dreams.

Moving away from the traditional cosmology, and turning to post-modern dream theory and cosmology, we see that the corpus of substantive assertions and ideas is less sharply defined here, than among the traditional, modernist, and Christian cosmologies. But in contrast to traditional dream sharing, the post-modern perspective on dreaming is eagerly distributed, cutting across other dream theories and cosmologies. The media play an important role. Dream accounts are transmitted through the Internet, radio, newspapers, and journals. Courses on dreaming are also organised, and open to all. Social engagement is less important than the creation of a hierarchical structure wherein a few have expert knowledge and need to teach the ignorant others. Such a social organisation makes it possible for one person to change a shared body of dream symbols, as Kristján Frímann attempts to do. This is only possible when this person speaks from a position of power. The practice belonging to dream interpretation in post-modern circles is not one of negotiating, but rather of transmitting meaning.

A similar hierarchical structure is found in areas where the Christian and modernist cosmologies are best represented. Here, knowledge is also in the hands of a few experts, and the spiritual power of humans and other beings is defined by and resides within the institutional context of the Lutheran Church (Wieland 1989, 20-21). Illustrative in this respect is my description of the spiritualist movement, initiated by (Canadian) Icelandic theologians and other scholars, who removed crucial elements of "pre-modern" society, such as contact with the dead and dream sharing, from their daily context. People with special gifts of seeing the world of the dead, and profound dreamers, were carefully selected and submitted to scientific experiments. Guidelines were introduced for how to communicate dream accounts. People were encouraged to write down the accounts, so a testimony could accompany it, confirming that the dream really was dreamt before the occurrence of the event that the dream was said to predict. As in the case of post-modern cosmology, the ontological assertions of the Christian and modernist cosmologies are communicated and distributed in areas where other cosmologies were or are represented. It seems that the mod-

ernist cosmology, with its powerful institutions, has been most successful in this.

The different cosmologies are thus unequally distributed in Icelandic society. They each have their own internal mechanisms of generation and distribution, their own histories, and are linked to different domains and networks. Not only are the endogenous forces described above responsible for their generation and change, the cosmologies also influence and shape each other. The modernisation of Icelandic society led to a division of the society into different domains--which Tambiah calls the atomisation of modern life (Tambiah 1990, 151)--and the dominance of the modernist cosmology, in many domains. The modernist cosmology pushed the traditional cosmology to the "background" of society. In the "foreground", the official discourse, stories of predictive dreams became interpreted as literary devices, and contact with the dead first as a topic for scientific investigation, then abandoned as a construction of the suffering mind or a reminiscent of the old peasant society. At the same time, literature received high acclaim as the main building block of Icelandic national identity, especially through the nationalist movement in the nineteenth century. A consequence of this was that accounts of revelatory dreams and of contact with the dead did not disappear, but were reproduced, and became accessible to all Icelanders.

The modernist cosmology not only ousted the traditional cosmology from several domains, but some of its elements became incorporated into other dream theories and cosmologies. My description of the situation involving the interpretation of the dream of the number twenty-five and Sigríður, the smiling grandmother dressed in the Icelandic folk costume, illustrates how a weather forecast, generated through scientific methods, can be integrated in the negotiation of meaning of a dream within the context of traditional dream sharing. The influence of the modernist cosmology is also present in the dream theory of Helgi Pjeturss. His theory accepted the ideas that hidden spheres could be disclosed through technological innovation and scientific investigation, and that their disclosure might lead to their disappearance. Therefore, hidden spheres were moved to areas still largely outside human control. Also, the idea of the suppression of consciousness, which, according to Helgi Pjeturss, made telepathy possible, is an example of this. Traces of the modernist cosmology are visible in the post-modern cosmology too, as elements of scientific epistemology are imitated. The fact that Kristján Frímann describes himself as a draumfræðingur, a dream scientist, nicely reflects the hybridisation of various approaches that characterizes post-modern circles. In Christian circles, psychoanalytical dream theory coexists with the idea that dreams can have their origins in God. As I indicated, the psychoanalytical approach, which claims that dreams are creations of the sleeping mind, and that descriptions of contact with the dead are evidence of the suffering mind, helps to maintain a sharp division between the unknowable godly domain and knowable human domains.

Not only is the modernist cosmology found in the official discourse, but the Christian cosmology is too, each linked to its own domain. The Christian cos-

mology has clearly penetrated the traditional and post-modern cosmology. Hidden spheres and spiritual elements in the world might be explained as influenced by the hand of God. The post-modern cosmology penetrates other cosmologies and practices. The dream forums of Kristján Frímann are quite popular, but people who support the traditional cosmology, and who have sent him their dreams, view his interpretation as one possible meaning of a dream which can be negotiated in the public arena of dream sharing. In other words, cosmologies are not just rich sources of imagery and argumentation that individuals and groups can creatively mine as they search for explanations and justifications of their activities (Herzfeld 2001, 193), but they have their own mechanisms of generation, distribution, and interaction. These qualities are responsible for constraining and shaping the creativity of dream sharing in Icelandic society.

Bibliography

Aðalsteinsson, Jón Hnefill, 1993. The testimony of waking consciousness and dreams in migratory legends concerning human encounters with the hidden peoplecolour. *Arv. Nordic Yearbook of Folklore*, 49, 123-31.

Aðalsteinsson, Jón Hnefill, 1999. *Undir the Cloak. A Pagan Ritual Turning Point in the Conversion of Iceland*. Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press.

Agnarsson, Ingvar, 1986. *Aðalheiður Tómasdóttir. Draumar og æðri handleiðsla*. Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Dyngja.

Agnarsson, Ingvar, 1993. *Furðuheimar draumanna*. Kópavogur: Skákprent.

Ahrens, Ullrich, 1996. *Fremde Träume. Eine ethnopsychologische Studie*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.

Álfum kennt um bilanir í tveimur ýtum í Leirdal. *Morgunblaðið*, 7 February 1996, Innlendar fréttir.

Alver, Bente, 1989. Concepts of the soul in Norwegian tradition. *In:* Reimund Kvideland and Henning H´K. Sehmsdorf, eds. *Nordic Folklore. Recent Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Anderson, Robert, 2005. *The Ghosts of Iceland*. Singapore: Wadsworth, Thomson.

D'Andrade, Roy G., 1961. Anthropological Studies of Dreams. *In:* Francis L. K. Hsu, ed. *Psychological Anthropology*. Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 296-332.

Aristotle, 1957. *On the Soul; Parva Naturalia; On Breath*. With an English translation by W.S. Hett. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Arnaldsdóttir, Ásdís A., Ragna Benedikta Garðarsdóttir and Friðrik Jónsson, 2007. *Könnun á íslenskri þjóðtrú og trúarviðhorfum*. Reykjavík: Félagsvísindastofnun, Háskóla Íslands.

Árnason, Jón. See primary sources.

Barraud, Cécile, Daniel de Coppet, André Iteanu, and Raymond Jamous, 1994. *Of Relations and the Dead. Four Societies viewed from the Angle of their Exchanges*. Oxford: Berg.

Barth, Fredrik, 1987. *Cosmologies in the Making. A Generative Approach to Cultural Variation in Inner New Guinea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barth, Fredrik, 1993. *Balinese Worlds*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Barth, Fredrik, 2002. An Anthropology of Knowledge. Sidney W. Mintz Lecture for 2000. *Current Anthropology*, 43 (1), 1-18.

Basso, Ellen B., 1987. The Implications of a Progressive Theory of Dreaming. *In*: Barbara Tedlock, ed. *Dreaming. Anthropological and Psychological Interpretations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 86-104.

Bauman, Zygmunt, 1993. *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bergson, Henri L., 1976. *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Bergson, Henri, 1958. *The World of Dreams*. New York: Philosophical Library.
Binswanger, Ludwig, 1986. Dream & Existence. *In:* Keith Hoeller, ed. *Dream and Existence*, 31- 78. New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc, 79-107.
Bjarnason, Ágúst H., 1915. *Drauma-Jói. Sannar sagnir af Jóhannesi Jónssyni frá Ásseli. Tilraunir o.fl.* Reykjavík: Bókaverzlun Sigfúsar Eymundssonar.
Bjartmarsdóttir, Guðrún, 1982. Ljúflingar og fleira fólk. Um formgerð, hugmyndafræði og hlutverk íslenskra huldufólkssagna. *Tímarit Máls og Menningar*, 3, 319-336.
Björnsdóttir, Inga Dóra, 1989. Public View and Private Voices. *In:* Gísli Pálsson and E. Paul Durrenberger, eds. *The Anthropology of Iceland*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 98-121.
Björnsson, Árni, 1981. *Merkisdagar á mannsævinni. Gamlar venjur, siðareglur og sagnir*. Reykjavík: Bókafélagið Saga.
Björnsson, Árni, 1996. Hvað merkir þjóðtrú? *Skírnir*, vor, 79-104.
Bourdieu, Pierre, 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Oxford: Polity Press.
Braudel, Fernand, 1972. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*. London: Collins.
Broch, Harald B., 1998. Når drømmen er virkelighet: Antropologiske innfallsvinkler til tolkning av drømmenes kulturelle betydning. *Norsk Antropologisk Tidsskrift*, 9, 7-20.
Burridge, Kenelm, 1972. Cargo. *In:* Pierre Maranda, ed. *Mythology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Byock, Jesse L., 2001. *Viking Age Iceland*. London: Penguin Books.
Cavallero, Corrado and David Foulkes, 1993. Conclusion. *In:* Corrado Cavallero and David Foulkes, eds. *Dreaming as Cognition*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
Christiansen, Eric, 2002. *The Norsemen in the Viking Age*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Clausen, Oscar, 1950. *Draumspakir íslendingar*. Reykjavík: Iðunnarútgáfan.
Clunies Ross, Margaret, 1994. *Prolonged Echoes. Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*. Volume 1: The Myths. Odense: Odense University Press.
Clunies Ross, Margaret and Lars Lönnroth, 1999. The Norse Muse: Report from an International Research Project. *Álvissmál*, 9, 3-28.
Comaroff, John L., 1987. Of totemism and ethnicity: Consciousness, practice and the signs of inequality. *Ethnos*, 52 (III-IV), 301-323.
Crapanzano, Vincent, 2001. The betwixt and between of the dream. *In:* Burkhard Schnepel, ed. *Hundert Jahre 'Die Traumdeutung': Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven in der Traumforschung*. Köln: Köppe, 232-260.
Descola, Philippe, 1989. Head-shrinkers versus shrinks: Jivaroan analysis of dreams. *Man, The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 24 (3), 439-450.
Desjarlais, Robert, 1991. *Samsara's Sadness: Sherpa Shamanism and the "Calling of Lost Souls"*. PhD dissertation in Anthropology. Los Angeles: University of California.

Dillmann, François-Xavier, 2006. *Les magiciens dans l'Islande ancienne*. Uppsala: Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur.
Draumabókin. Heillaráð til að dreyma vinningzzztölur í Lottó. Lottó Nonni og Manni /Ydda. NM06106/sia.is
Dumont, Louis, 1985. A modified view of our origins: The Christian beginnings of modern individualism. *In:* Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes, eds. *The Category of the Person*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 93-122.
Durrenberger, E. Paul, 1984. Icelandic saga heroes: The anthropology of existentialists. *Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly*, 9, 3-8.
Durrenberger, E. Paul and Bob Quinlan, 1987. The structure of the Prose Edda. *Scandinavian Yearbook of Folklore*, 41, 65-76.
Durrenberger, E. Paul, 1988. Stratification without a state. The collapse of the Icelandic Commonwealth. *Ethnos*. 53, 239-265.
Durrenberger, E. Paul, 1989. Anthropological perspectives on the Commonwealth Period. *In:* E. Paul Durrenberger and Gísli Pálsson, eds. *The Anthropology of Iceland*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 228-247.
Durrenberger, E. Paul, 1990. Texts and transactions in Commonwealth Iceland. *Ethnos*, 55, 74-91.
Durrenberger, E. Paul, 1992. Law and literature in Medieval Iceland. *Ethnos*, 57 (1-2), 31-49.
Durrenberger, E. Paul, 1996. Every Icelander a special case. *In:* Gísli Pálsson and E. Paul Durrenberger, eds. *Images of Contemporary Iceland. Everyday Lives and Global Contexts*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 171-191.
Durrenberger, E. Paul and Jonathan Wilcox, 1992. Humor as a guide to social change: *Bandamanna saga* and heroic values. *In:* Gísli Pálsson, ed. *From Sagas to Society. Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland*. Middlesex: Hisarlik Press.
Edgar, Iain, 2006. The 'True Dream' in contemporary Islamic/Jihadist dreamwork: a case study of the dreams of Taliban Leader Mullah Omar. *Contemporary South Asia*, 15 (3), 263-272.
Edgar, Iain and David Henig, 2010. 'Istikhara: The guidance and practice of Islamic dream incubation through ethnographic comparison'. *History and Anthropology* 21 (3), 251-262.
Eggan, Dorothy, 1952. The manifest content of dreams: A challenge to social science. *American Anthropologist*, 54, 469-485.
Eggan, Dorothy, 1955. The personal use of myth in dreams. *The Journal of American Folklore* 68 (270), Myth: A Symposium, 445-453.
Eggertsson, Thráinn, 1996. No experiments, monumental disasters. Why it took a thousand years to develop a specialised fishing industry in Iceland? *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organisation*, 30, 1-23.
Einarsson, Níels, 1990. Of seals and souls. Changes in the position of seals in the world view of Icelandic small-scale fishermen. *Maritime Anthropological Studies*, 3 (2), 35-58.

Einarsson, Stefán, 1957. *A History of Icelandic Literature*. New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation.
Eiríksson, Hallfreður Örn, 1971. *Söfnun þjóðfræði*. Reykjavík: Handrítastofnun Íslands.
Eiríksson, Hallfreður Örn, 1972. Lífsatriði og draumar. *Súlur*, 2 (2), 137-144.
Eiríksson, Hallfreður Örn, 1975. On Icelandic rímur: an orientation. *Arv. Nordic Yearbook of Folklore*, 31, 139-150
Eiríksson, Hallfreður Örn, 1983. Commentary. *Studia Fennica 27*, 137-139
Eiríksson, Hallfreður Örn, 1984. The quest for meaning in Icelandic political dreams. *In:* R. Kvideland and T. Selberg, eds. *Papers III. The 8th Congress for the International Society for Folknarrative Research,* 12-17 June, Bergen, 247-254.
Eiríksson, Hallfreður Örn, 1992. Drömmar og ödestro. *In:* Ulf Palmenfelt and Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj, eds. *Drömmar och kultur*. NIF Publications, no. 23. Stockholm: Carlssons, 90-97.
Eliade, Mircea, 1964. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. London: Routledge.
Ewing, Katherine P., 1990. The dream of spiritual self initiation and the organisation of self representations among Pakistani Sufis. *American Ethnologist*, 17 (1), 56-74.
Fabian, Johannes, 1966. Dream and charisma. 'Theories of dreams' in the Jamaa-Movement (Congo). *Anthropos*, 61, 544-560.
Falk, Hjalmar and Alf Torp, 1903. *Etymologisk ordbog over det norske og det danske sprog*, Kristiania: Forlagt af H. Aschehoug & Co. (W. Nygaard), I.
Ferðast um huliðsheima. *Morgunblaðið*, 15 June 1997, blaðaukar.
Firth, Raymond, 1930-31. Totemism in Polynesia. *Oceania*, 1, 291-321.
Firth, Raymond, 1998. Reflections on knowledge in an Oceanic setting. *In:* Verena Keck, ed. *Common Worlds and Single Lives. Constituting Knowledge in Pacific Societies*. Oxford: Berg, 33-51.
Foucault, Michel, 1986. Dream, imagination and existence. *In:* Keith Hoeller, ed., *Dream and Existence*. New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc, 29-79.
Frazer, James, 1993 [1890]. *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.
Freud, Sigmund, 1961. *Die Traumdeutung*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.
Freud, Sigmund, 1970 [1905]. Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten. *In:* Sigmund Freud. *Studienausgabe Band IV. Psychologische Schriften*. Frankfurt: Fischer Wissenschaft, 9-221.
Friðriksson, Adolf and Orri Vésteinsson, 2003. Creating a past: A historiography of the settlement of Iceland. *In:* James H. Barrett, ed. *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse: the Norse Colonisation of the North Atlantic*. Turnhout: Brepols.

Frímann, Kristján, 1991. *Draumar. Fortíð þín, nútíð og framtíð*. Reykjavík: Hörpuútgáfan.
Frímann, Kristján, 1995. Draumsjáin. *Nýir tímar*, 1, 17.
Frímann, Kristján, 1999. Kristsdraumur. *Morgunblaðið,* 17 July.
Garðarsdóttir, Ólöf, 1999. Naming practices and the importance of kinship networks in early Nineteenth-Century Iceland. *The History of the Family*, 4 (3), 297-314.
Geertz, Armin, 1992. *The Invention of Prophecy. Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Gernet, Alexander von, 2004. Saving the souls: Reincarnation beliefs of the seventeenth-century Huron *In:* Antonia Mills and Richard Slobodin, eds. *Amerindian Rebirth. Reincarnation belief among the North American Indians and Inuit*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 28-55.
Gíslason, Magnús, 1977. *Kvälssvaka*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
Glaskin, Katie, 2010. On dreams, innovation and the emerging genre of the individual artist. *Anthropological Forum*, 20 (3), 251-267.
Glendinning, Robert James, 1973-1974. The dreams in Sturla Þórðarson's Íslendinga Saga and literary consciousness in 13th century Iceland. *Arv* 29-30, 128-148.
Glendinning, Robert James, 1974. *Träume und Vorbedeutung in der Islendinga Saga Sturla Thordarsons. Eine Form- und Stiluntersuchung*. Bern: Herbert Lang & Cie AG.
Goulet, Jean-Guy, 1994. Dreams and visions in other life-worlds. *In:* David E. Young and Jean-Guy Goulet, eds. *Being Changed by Cross-Cultural Encounters: The Anthropology of Extraordinary Experiences*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 16-38.
Graham, Laura R., 1994. Dialogic dreams. Creative selves coming into life in the flow of time. *American Ethnologist*, 21 (4), 723-745.
Graham, Laura R., 1995. *Performing Dreams. Discourses of immortality among the Xavante of Central Brazil*. Austin: University of Texas.
Graham, Laura R., 2000. Dreams. *Linguistic Anthropology*, 9 (1-2), 61-64.
Grambo, Ronald, 1984. En seidkvinne på Grønland. Noen tanker om et avsnitt í Eiríks saga rauða. *Middelalderforum, forum mediaevale*, 3-4, 56-69.
Grambo, Ronald, 1989. Unmanliness and *Seiðr*. Problems concerning the change of sex. *In:* Mihály Hoppál and Otto J. von Sadovszky, eds. *Shamanism: Past and Present*. Budapest: International Society for Transoceanic Research, part 1, 103-114.
Granovetter, Mark, 1973. The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78 (6), 1360-1380.
Gregor, Thomas, 1985. *Anxious Pleasures. The Sexual Lives of an Amazonian People*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Guðmundsson, Böðvar, Sverrir Tómasson, Torfi H. Tulinius, Vesteinn Ólason, eds., 1993. *Íslensk bókmenntasaga II.* Reykjavík: Mál og Menning.

Guédon, Marie Françoise, 1994. Dene ways and the etnographer's culture. *In:* David E. Young and Jean-Guy Goulet, eds. *Being Changed by Cross-Cultural Encounters. The Anthropology of Extraordinairy Experience.* Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 39-70.

Gulcher, Jeffrey, Agnar Helgason and Kári Stefánsson, 2000. Genetic homogeneity of Icelanders (Correspondence). *Nature Genetics*, 26, 395.

Gunnell, Terry, 2000. From Grímnismál to graffiti. Themes and approaches in 1000 Years of Icelandic folkloristics [online]. *Den 28. Nordiske Etnolog- og folkloristkongress, 3-6 May 2000, Hankø, Norway.* Available from: http://www.hanko.uio.no/planses/TerryGunnel.html.

Gunnell, Terry, 2005. Eddic poetry. *In:* Rory McTurk, ed. *A Companion to Old Icelandic Literature and Culture.* Oxford: Blackwell, 82-100.

Gunnell, Terry, 2007. How Elvish were the *Álfar*? *In:* Andrew Wawn, Graham Johnson and John Walter, eds. *Constructing Nations, Reconstructing Myth: Essays in Honour of Tom Shippey*. Turnhout: Brepols, 111-130.

Gunnlaugsson, Gísli Ágúst, 1988. *Family and Household in Iceland 1801-1930.* Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.

Gurevich, A. Ya., 1969. Space and time in the *Weltmodell* of the Old Scandinavian peoples. *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 2, 42-53.

Iannone, Gyles, 2002. Annales History and the Ancient Maya State: Some observations on the "dynamic model". *American Anthropologist, New Series*, 104 (1), 68-78.

Haeckel, Margarete, 1934. *Die Darstellung und Funktion des Traumes in der isländischen Familiensaga.* Hamburg.

Hagskinna. sögulegur hagtölur um ísland. Icelandic Historical Statistics, 1997. Guðmundur Jónsson, ed. Reykjavík: Hagstofa Íslands.

Hafstein, Valdimar Tr., 2000. The Elves' point of view. *Fabula* 41 (1+2), 87-104.

Hagstofa Íslands [Statistics Iceland], 2000. *Landshagir 2000* [*Statistical yearbook of Iceland 2000*]. Reykjavík: Hagstofa Íslands.

Hagvangur, 1984. *Könnun á gildismati og mannlegum viðhorfum íslendinga. Fyrsta niðurstöður*. Reykjavík: unpublished report.

Hálfdanarson, Guðmundur, 1991. *Old Provinces, Modern Nations: Political Responses to State-Integration in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Iceland and Brittany*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Ithaca: Cornell University.

Hálfdanarson, Guðmundur, 1995. Social distinctions and national unity: On politics of nationalism in nineteenth century Iceland. *History of European Ideas*, 21 (6), 763-779.

Hallgrímsson, Helgi, 1996. Huldumanna genesis. Íslenskar sagnir um uppruna og eðli huldufólks. *Andvari*, 121, 64-76.

Hanegraaff, Wouter J., 1996. *New Age Religion and Western Culture. Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Hannerz, Ulf, 1980. *Exploring the City. Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology*. New York and Guildford, Surrey: Columbia University Press.

Hannerz, Ulf, 1992. *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organisation of Meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Haraldsson, Erlendur, 1978. Þessa heims og annars. Könnun á dulrænni reynslu Íslendinga,
trúarviðhorfum og þjóðtrú. Reykjavík: Bókaforlagið Saga.
Haraldsson, Erlendur, 1988-1989. Survey of claimed encounters with the dead. *Omega: Journal of Death & Dying*, 19, 103-113.
Harðarsson, Bjarni, 2001. *Landið, fólkið og þjóðtrúin: kortlagðir álagablettir og byggðir trölla, álfa, drauga, skrímsla og útilegumanna í Árnesþingi*. Selfoss: Sunnlenska Bókaútgáfan.
Hastrup, Kirsten, 1981. Cosmology and society in Medieval Iceland. A social anthropological perspective on world-view. *Ethnologia Scandinavica*, 11, 63-78.
Hastrup, Kirsten, 1985. *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland. An Anthropological Analysis of Structure and Change*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Hastrup, Kirsten, 1990a. *Island of Anthropology. Studies in Past and Present Iceland*. Odense: Odense University Press.
Hastrup, Kirsten, 1990b. *Nature and Policy in Iceland 1400-1800. An Anthropological Analysis of History and Mentality*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Hastrup, Kirsten, 1992. A question of reason: Breast-feeding patterns in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Iceland. *In:* Vanessa Maher, ed. *The Anthropology of Breastfeeding – Natural Law or Social Construct*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 91-108.
Hastrup, Kirsten, 1998. *A Place Apart. An Anthropological Study of the Icelandic World*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Heide, Eldar, 2006. Spirits through respiratory passages. *In:* John McKinnell, ed. *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic literature. Sagas and the British Isles*: Preprint papers of the 13th International Saga Conference, Durham and York, 6th-12th August, 350-358.
Heijnen, Adriënne, 2001. Dream sharing in contemporary Iceland. An anthropological study of tradition in modern society. *North Atlantic Studies,* 4 (1+2), 54-57.
Heijnen, Adriënne, 2005. Dreams, darkness and hidden Spheres. *Paideuma*, 51, 193-207.
Heijnen, Adriënne, 2007. Stregkoder, sparegrise og barnedåb. Det islandske selv i entreprenørskab og navngivning. *Tidskriftet Antropologi*, 55, 21-35
Heijnen, Adriënne, 2010. Relating through dreams: Names, genes and shared substance. *History and Anthropology*, 21 (3), 307-319.
Heijnen, Adriënne and Iain Edgar, 2010. Imprints of Dreaming. *History and Anthropology*, 21 (3), 217-226.
Helgadóttir, Yelena Sesselja, 2006. Draumvísur and draugavísur in Icelandic Sagas: The border between fantasy and reality. *In:* John McKinnell, ed. *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic literature. Sagas and the British*

isles: Preprint papers of The 13th International Saga Conference Durham and York, 6th-12th August, 1086-1095.
Helgason, Agnar, Sigrún Sigurðardóttir, Jayne Nicholson, Bryan Sykes, Emmeline W. Hill, Daniel G. Bradley, Vidar Bosnes, Jeffrey R. Gulcher, Ryk Ward and Kári Stefánsson, 2000a. Estimating Scandinavian and Gaelic ancestry in the male settlers of Iceland. *American Journal of Human Genetics*, 67, 697-717.
Helgason, Agnar, Sigrún Sigurðardóttir, Jeffrey R. Gulcher, Ryk Ward and Kári Stefánsson, 2000b. mtDNA and the origin of the Icelanders: Deciphering signals of recent population history. *American Journal of Human Genetics*, 66, 999-1016.
Helgason, Agnar, Emilce Hickey, Sara Goodacre, Eileen Vega, Vidar Bosnes, Kári Stefánsson, Ryk Ward, Bryan Sykes, 2001. MtDNA and the Islands of the North Atlantic: Estimating the proportions of Norse and Gaelic Ancestry. *American Journal of Human Genetics*, 66, 723-737.
Helgason, Agnar, Jayne Nicholson, Kári Stefansson and Peter Donnelly, 2003. A reassessment of genetic diversity in Icelanders: Strong evidence from multiple loci for relative homogeneity caused by genetic drift. *Annals of Human Genetics*, 67, 281-97.
Henzen, Wilhelm, 1890. *Über die Träume in der Altnordischen Sagalitteratur.* Dissertation. Leipzig: Verlag von Gustav Fock.
Herdt, Gilbert, 1987. Selfhood and discourse in Sambia dream sharing. *In:* Barbara Tedlock, ed. *Dreaming. Anthropological and Psychological Interpretations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 55-85.
Hering, Jean, 1947. Concerning image, idea, and dream. Phenomenological notes in connection with Jean Paul Sartre's book L'Imaginaire. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 8(2), 188-205.
Herzfeld, Michael, 2001. *Anthropology. Theoretical Practice in Culture and Society.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
Hobart, Mark, 1993. Introduction: The growth of ignorance? *In:* Mark Hobart, ed. *An Anthropological Critique of Development. The Growth of Ignorance.* London: Routledge, 1-30.
Hobson, J. Allan, 2009. REM sleep and dreaming. Towards a theory of protoconsciousness. *Nature Reviews. Neuroscience*, 10, 803-815.
Homan, Theo, 1975. Skíðaríma. An Inquiry into the Written and Printed Texts, References and Commentaries. Amsterdam: Rodopi N.V.
Honigman, John J., 1954. *Culture and Personality.* New York: Harper.
Howell, Signe, 1989. Of persons and things: Exchange and valuables among the Lio of Eastern Indonesia. *Man, New Series*, 24 (3), 419-438.
Hrafnbjargarson, Gunnar Hrafn, 2004. *Oblique Subjects and Stylistic Fronting in the History of Scandinavian and English.*: The Role of IP-Spec. Ph.D. diss. Århus: Aarhus University.
Huldufólkið í *Nýir Tímar* 1994, 19.

Ingold, Tim, 1993. Globes and spheres. The topology of environmentalism. *In:* Karl Milton, ed. *Environmentalism. The View from Anthropology*. London: Routledge.
Ingold, Tim, 1996. The past is a foreign country. *In:* Tim Ingold, ed. *Key Debates in Anthropology*. London: Routledge.
Ingold, Tim, 2000. *The Perception of the Environment. Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge.
Ingólfsfjall. Tvennt ferst í Snjóflóði. *Morgunblaðið*, 2 February 1982.
*Íslensk orðabók fyrir skóla og skrifstofur,*1994. Ritstjóri Árni Böðvarsson. Reykjavík: Mál og Menning.
Jakobsen, Jakob. See primary sources.
Jędrej, M.C. and Rosalind Shaw, 1992. Introduction. *In:* M.C. Jędrej and Rosalind Shaw, eds. *Dreaming, Religion and Society in Africa.* Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1-21.
Jóhannsson, Símon Jón, 1996. *Hvern dreymdi þig? Skyringar á merkingu mannanafna í draumum.* Reykjavík: Vaka-Helgafell.
Jóhannsson, Símon Jón, 1999. *Stóra draumaráðningabókin*. Reykjavík: Vaka-Helgafell.
Jónasson frá Hrafnagili, Jónas, 1934. *Íslenzkir þjóðhættir*. Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja.
Jones, Gwyn, 1986. *The Norse Atlantic Saga. Being the Norse Voyages of Discovery and Settlement to Iceland, Greenland, and North America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Jónasson, Hermann, 1912. *Draumar: Erindi flutt í Reykjavík í febrúar 1912.* Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja.
Jónsson frá Minna-Núpi, Brynjúlfur, 1955. *Dulrænar smásögur.* Reykjavík: Menningar -og Fræðslusamband Alþýðu.
Jónsson, Jón, 2000. "Bíta kvaðst hún börnin og blæða láta í skel": Þjóðtrú, hræðsla og hryllingur. *In:* Friðrik H. Jónsson and Ingjaldur Hannibalsson, eds. *Rannsóknir í félagsvisindum III. Erindi flutt á ráðstefnu í október 1999.* Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 409-420.
Jónsson, Þorsteinn, 1999, ed. *Hrunamenn. Ábúendur og saga Hrunamannahrepps frá 1890.* Reykjavík: Byggðir og bú.
Jung, Carl, 1948. General aspects of dream psychology. *In: Collected Works of C.G. Jung.* Vol. 8. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Kapferer, Bruce, 2003. Introduction: Outside all reason –Magic, sorcery and epistemology in anthropology. *In:* Bruce Kapferer, ed. *Beyond Rationalism. Rethinking Magic, Witchcraft and Sorcery*. New York: Berghahn Books.
Karlsson, Gunnar, 2000. *Iceland's 1100 years. The History of a Marginal Society.* Reykjavík: Mál og Menning.
Keesing, Felix, 1963. *Cultural Anthropology. The Science of Custom*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
Kelchner, Georgia Dunham, 1935. *Dreams in Old Norse Literature and their Affinities in Folklore*. Cambridge: At The University Press.

Kirtsoglou, Elisabeth, 2010. Dreaming the self: A unified approach towards dreams, subjectivity and the radical imagination, *History and Anthropology*, 21 (3), 321-335.

Kolband, Stephane and Sam Law, 2001. *Dreams and Dream Interpretation*. Inuit Perspectives on the twentieth Century Series, Nunavut Arctic College.

Kolig, Erich, 1989. *Dreamtime Politics. Religion, Worldview and Utopian Thought in Australian Aboriginal Society*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.

Kracke, Waud, 1979. Dreaming in Kagwahiv*:* Dream beliefs and their psychic uses in an Amazonian Indian Culture. *Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, 8 (11), 119-171.

Kracke, Waud, 1987. Myths in dreams, Thought in images: An Amazonian contribution to the psychoanalytic theory of primary process. *In:* Barbara Tedlock, ed. *Dreaming. Anthropological and Psychological Interpretations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 31-54.

Kracke, Waud, 2003a. Beyond the mythologies: A shape of dreaming. *In:* Roger Ivar Lohmann, ed. *Dream Travelers. Sleep Experiences and Culture in the Western Pacific*. New York: Pallgrave, Macmillian, 211-235.

Kracke, Waud, 2003b. Dream: Ghost of a tiger, a system of human words. *In:* Jeanette Mageo, ed. *Dreaming and the Self: New Perspectives on Subjectivity, Identity, and Emotion.* New York: State University of New York Press, 155-164.

Kratschmer, Alexandra and Adriënne Heijnen, 2010. Revelative evidentiality in European languages: Linguistic marking and its anthropological background. *In:* Gabriele Diewald and Elena Smirnova, eds. *Linguistic Realisation of Evidentiality in European Languages*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 331-368.

Kress, Helga, 1987. Bróklindi Falgeirs: Fóstbræðrasaga og hláturmenning miðalda. *Skírnir*, 161, 271-286.

Kristjánsson, Guðmundur Ingi, 1993. *Sóldagar. Ljóðasafn*. Akranes: Hörpuútgáfan.

Kruger, Steven F., 1992. *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kuper, Adam, 1979. A structural approach to dreams. *Man. New Series.* 14 (4), 645-662.

Larsen, Sofus, 1917. *Antik og nordisk drømmetro*. Særtryk af Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie. København: H.H. Thieles Bogtrykkeri.

Lárusdóttir Reumert, Rannveig, 2001. *Forseglet budskab. En antropologisk analyse af moderne åndepåkaldelse i Island*. Specialerække, nr. 188. Institut for Antropologi, København Universitet.

Lárusson, Sigurður, 1999. Bréf til blaðsins. Er trúfelsi staðreynd á Íslandi? *Morgunblaðið*, 2 December 1999, 78.

Latour, Bruno and Steve Woolgar, 1979. Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts. Los Angeles: Sage.

Leach, Edmund, 1964. Anthropological aspects of language: Animal categories and verbal abuse. *In:* Eric H. Lenneberg, ed. *New Directions in the Study of Language*. Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 23-63.

Leach, Edmund, 1976. *Culture & Communication. The Logic by which Symbols are Connected*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Levi-Strauss, Claude, 1962. *Le totémisme aujourdhui*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Lincoln, Jackson Steward and Charles G. Seligman, 1935. *The Dream in Primitive Culture*. London Cresset Press.

Lohmann, Roger Ivar, ed., 2003. *Dream Travelers. Sleep Experiences and Culture in the Western Pacific*. New York: Pallgrave, Macmillian.

Lohmann, Roger Ivar, 2007. Dreams and ethnography. *In:* Deirdre Barrett and Patrick McNamara, eds. *The New Science of Dreaming,* vol. 3, Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives. Praeger, Westport, CT, 35-69.

Lohmann, Roger Ivar, 2010. How evaluating dreams makes history. Asabano examples. *History and Anthropology*, 21 (3), 227-249.

Lönnroth, Lars, 2002. Dreams in the Sagas. *Scandinavian Studies*, 74 (4), 455-465.

Lönnroth, Lars, 2006. Sverrir's dreams. *In:* John McKinnell, ed. *The Fantastic in OldNorse/Icelandic Literature. Sagas and the British isles*: Preprint papers of The 13th International Saga Conference Durham and York, 6th-12th August, 603-613.

Mageo, Jeanette Marie, 2003. *Dreaming and the Self: New Perspectives on Subjectivity, Identity, and Emotion*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Malinowski, Bronislaw, 1987. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Mauss, Marcel, 1993. *The Gift. The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Translated by W. B. Halls. London: Routledge.

McCreesh, Bernadine, 2005. Prophetic dreams and visions in the Sagas of the early Icelandic saints. *In:* Antonina Harbus and Russell Poole, eds. *Verbal Encounters: Anglo Saxon and Old Norse Studies for Roberta Frank*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 247-269.

Meulengracht Sørensen, Preben, 1993. *Saga and Society: An Introduction to Old Norse Literature* Odense: Odense University Press.

Miller, William I., 1986. Dreams, prophecy and the secret offender in Medieval Iceland. *Scandinavian Studies*, 58, 101-123.

Mills, Antonia and Richard Slobodin, eds., 1994. *Amerindian Rebirth. Reincarnation Belief among the North American Indians and Inuit*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Mills, C. Wright, 1940. Situated action and vocabularies of motive. *American Sociological Review,* 5 (6), 904-913.

Mol, Annemarie and John Law, 2002. *Complexities: Social Studies of Knowledge Practices*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Molenaar, Henk A., 1982. Concentric dualism as transition between a lineal and cyclic representation of life and death in Scandinavian mythology. *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde*. 138 (1), 29-53.
Mundal, Else, 1974. *Fylgjemotiva i Norrøn litteratur*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
Námvísir 6, 1997. Reykjavík: Sálarrannsóknarskólinn, útgáfa 6, vormisseri, bráðabirgðaútgáfa fyrir nemendur í Sálarrannsóknum 1.
Nicolaisen, Olaus, 1889. *Fra Nordlands fortid. Sagn og historie*. Kristiania, vol. I.
Niehaus, Isak, 2002. Bodies, heat and taboos: Conceptualizing modern personhood in the South African Lowveld. *Ethnology,* 41, 189-207.
Nordal, Guðrún, 1998. *Ethics and Action in Thirteenth Century Iceland*. Odense: Odense University Press.
Nordal, Guðrún, 2006. To dream or not to dream: A question of method. *In:* John McKinnell, ed. *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic literature. Sagas and the British isles*: Preprint papers of The 13th International Saga Conference Durham and York, 6th-12th August, 304-313.
Nordal, Sigurður, 1990. *Icelandic Culture*. New York: Cornell University Library.
Nuttall, Mark, 1992. *Arctic Homeland. Kinship, Community and Development in Northwest Greenland*. London: Belhaven Press in Association with Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge.
Obeyesekere, Gananath, 2004. Foreword: Reincarnation eschatologies and the comparative study of religion. *In:* Antonia Mills and Richard Slobodin, eds. *Amerindian Rebirth. Reincarnation Belief among the North American Indians and Inuit*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, xi-xxiv.
Odner, Knut, 1974. Economic structures in western Norway in the Early Iron Age. *Norwegian Archaeological Review*. 7, 104-112.
Ólafsson, Eggert, 1975 [1772]. See primary sources.
Ólason, Vésteinn, 1998. *Dialogues with the Viking Age. Narration and Representation in the Sagas of the Icelanders*. Reykjavík: Heimskringla. Mál og Menning Academic Division.
Oma, Kristin, 2004. Hesten og det heilage. *In:* Lene Melheim, Lotte Heidager, Kristin Oma, eds. *Mellom himmel og jord*. Foredrag af et seminar om religionsarkæologi, 31. januar - 2. februar 2002, Isegran. Oslo Archaeological Series, nr. 2. Oslo: Institutt for Arkeologi, Kunsthistorie og konservering, Universitetet i Oslo, 68-81.
Otto, Ton, 1997. Informed participation and participating informants. *Canberra Anthropology*, 20 (1+2), 96-108.
Pálsson, Gísli, 1990. The idea of fish: Land and sea in the Icelandic world-view. *In:* Roy G. Willis, ed. *Signifying Animals. Human Meaning in the Natural World*. London: Unwin Hyman, 119-132.
Pálsson, Gísli, 1991. *Coastal Economies, Cultural Accounts. Human Ecology and Icelandic Discourse*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Pálsson, Gísli and E. Paul Durrenberger, 1982. To dream of fish: The causes of Icelandic skippers' fishing success. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 38 (2), 227-242.
Pálsson, Gísli and E. Paul Durrenberger, 1983. Icelandic foremen and skippers: The structure and evolution of a folk model. *American Ethnologist,* 10 (3), 511-528.
Pálsson, Gísli and E. Paul Durrenberger, 1986. Finding fish: The tactics of Icelandic skippers, *American Ethnologist*, 13(2), 213-229.
Pálsson, Gísli and Durrenberger, E. Paul, 1992. Icelandic dialogues: Individual differences in indigenous discourse. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 48 (4), 301-16.
Pálsson, Gísli and E. Paul Durrenberger, 1996. *Images of Contemporary Iceland. Everyday Lives and Global Contexts*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press.
Pálsson, Gísli, 1995. *The Textual Life of Savants. Ethnography, Iceland, and the Linguistic Turn.* Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers.
Parman, Susan, 1991. *Dream and Culture. An Anthropological Study of the Western Intellectual Tradition.* New York: Præger.
Perrin, Michel, 1992. *Les Praticiens du rêve. Un exemple de chamanisme.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
Pétursson, Pétur, 1980. Trúarlegar hreyfingar í Reykjavík tvo fyrstu áratugi 20. aldar. *Saga. Tímarit sögufélags.* XVIII, 179-224.
Pétursson, Pétur, 1981. Trúarlegar hreyfingar í Reykjavík tvo fyrstu áratugi 20. aldar. Annar hluti. K.F.U.M. og skyld félög. *Saga. Tímarit sögufélags.* XVI-II, 177-274.
Pétursson, Pétur, 1986. Trúarlegar hreyfingar í Reykjavík tvo fyrstu áratugi 20. aldar. *Morgunn*, Haust, 5-37.
Pétursson, Pétur, 1990a. *Church and Social Change. A Study of the Secularisation Process in Iceland 1830-1930.* Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan.
Pétursson, Pétur, 1990b. Spíritismi og dultrúarhreyfingar á Íslandi. *Morgunn*, 71. árg. Síðari hefti, 59-66.
Pétursson, Einar G., 1998. *Eddurit Jóns Guðmundssonar Lærða. Samantektir um skilning á Eddu og að fornu í þeirri gömlu norrænu kölluðust rúnir bæði ristingar og skrifelse*, II texti. Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi.
Pjeturss, Helgi, 1919-1922. *Nýall. Nokkur íslenzk drög til heimsfræði og líffræði.* Reykjavík: Bókaverzlun Guðm. Gamalíelssonar.
Platenkamp, Jos D.M., 1997. Visibility and Objectification in Tobelo Ritual. *The 21st Taniguchi International Symposium Rethinking Indonesian Rituals.* National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan.
Ploeg, Jan Douwe van der, 1993. Potatoes and knowledge. *In:* Mark Hobart, ed. *An Anthropological Critique of Development. The Growth of Ignorance.* London: Routledge, 209-227.
Poirier, Sylvy, 2003. "This is good country. We are good dreamers": Dreams and dreaming in the Australian Western Desert. *In*: Roger Ivar Lohmann, ed.

Dream Travelers. Sleep Experiences and Culture in the Western Pacific. New York: Pallgrave, Macmillian, 107-125.
Poirier, Sylvy, 2005. A World of Relationships. Itineraries, Dreams, and Events in the Australian Desert. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Pons, Christophe, 2002. *Le spectre et le voyant. Les échanges entre morts et vivants en Islande*. Paris: Presse de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne.
Ray, Keith, 1992. Dreams of grandeur: The call to the office in Northcentral Igbo religious leadership. *In:* M.C. Jędrej and Rosalind Shaw, eds. *Dreaming, Religion and Society in Africa.* Leiden: E. J. Brill, 55-71.
Reynolds, Pamela, 1992. Dreams and the constitution of Self among the Zezuru. *In:* M.C. Jędrej and Rosalind Shaw, eds. *Dreaming, Religion and Society in Africa*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 21-36.
Riches, David, 1995. Dreaming as social process, and its implication for consciousness. *In:* Anthony P. Cohen and Nigel Rapport, eds. *Questions of Consciousness*. London: Routledge, 101-116.
Roepstorff, Andreas, 2003. Clashing cosmologies: Contrasting knowledge in the Greenlandic Fishery. *In:* Andreas Roepstorff, Kalevi Kull and Nils Bubandt, eds. *Imagining Nature. Practices of Cosmology and Identity*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 117-142.
Ross, Margaret Clunies, 1994. *Prolonged Echoes. Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society.* Volume 1: The Myths. Odense: Odense University Press.
Ross, Margaret Clunies and Lönnroth, Lars, 1999. The Norse muse: Report from an international research project. *Álvissmál*, 9, 3-28.
Sahlins, Marshall, 2004. *Stone Age Economics*. London: Routledge.
Schach, Paul, 1971. Symbolic dreams of future renown in Old Icelandic literature. *Mosaic* IV (4), 51-73.
Schmitt, Jean-Claude, 1994. *Ghosts in the Middle Ages. The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Schnepel, Burkhard, 2001. Einleitung: Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven in der Traumforschung. *In:* Burkhard Schnepel, ed. *Hundert Jahre 'Die Traumdeutung'. Kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven in der Traumforschung*. Köln: Köppe, 7-31.
Seligman, Charles G., 1924. Anthropology and psychology: A study of some points of contact. *The Journal of The Royal Anthropological Institute*, 54, 13-46.
Selstad, Leif, 1998. Konstruksjon og diskurs: Nyere antropologiske bidrag til studiet av tradisjon. *Norsk antropologisk tidsskrift*, 9, 202-214.
Sigurðsson, Gísli, 1995. Kötludraumur: Flökkuminni eða þjóðfélagsumræða? *Gripla* 9, 189-217.
Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann, 1996. *Krákustaðaætt Ættarsaga, niðjutal og framættir Sigurbjarghar Margrétardóttir og Guðvarðar Þorsteinssonar á Krákustöðum.* Reykjavík: Þjóðsaga.

Sigurðsson, Haraldur, 1976. Fjögurra alda afmæli bókagerðar Guðbrands Þorlákssonar biskups 1575-1975. *In: Árbók. Landsbókasafn Íslands 1975*. Reykjavík, Landsbókasafn, 40-53.
Simpson, Ian A. et al., 2001. Crossing the thresholds: Human ecology and historical patterns of landscape degradation. *Catena* 42 (2-4), 175-192.
Sluijter, Paula C.M., 1936. *IJslands volksgeloof*. Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon N.V.
Smith, Kevin, 1995. *Landnám*: The settlement of Iceland in archaeological and historical perspective. *World Archaeology*, 26 (3), 319-347.
Sperber, Dan, 1975. *Rethinking Symbolism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Spiegel, Gabrielle M., 1990. History, historicism, and the social logic of the text in the Middle ages. *Speculum*, 65 (1), 59-96.
Stefánsdóttir, Erla, 1993. *Hafnafjörður. Hidden Worlds Map*. Hafnafjörður: The Hafnafjörður Tourism Committtee.
Steffensen, Jón, 1975. *Menning og meinsemdir: Ritgerðasafn um mótunarsögu íslenskrar þjóðar og baráttu hennar við hungur og sóttir*. Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja.
Steingrímsson, Jón, 1973. *Ævisagan og önnur rit. Jón Steingrímsson*; Kristján Albertsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Helgafell.
Steingrímsson, Jón, 2002. *A Very Present Help in Trouble: The Autobiography of the Fire-Priest Jón Steingrimsson*; translated by Michael Fell. New York: Peter Lang.
Stephen, Michele, 1995. *A'aisa's Gifts. A Study of Magic and the Self*. Berkely: University of California Press.
Stephensen, Magnus, 1808. *Island i det attende Aarhundrede. Historisk-politisk skildret ved Magnus Stephensen*. København: Trykt paa den Gyldendalsche Boghandlings Forlag ved Johan Rudolph Thiele.
Stewart, Charles, 1997. Fields in dreams: Anxiety, experience, and the limits of social constructionism in Modern Greek Dream Narratives. *American Ethnologist,* 24 (4), 877-94.
Storm, Gustav, 1893. Vor Forfædres Tro paa Sjælevandring og deres Opkaldelsessystem. *In:* Axel Kock, ed. *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi*, femte bandet, 199-222.
Strathern, Marilyn, 1988. *The Gender of the Gift. Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Ström, Hans, 1762-1766. *Physisk og oeconomisk Beskrivelse over Fogderiet Søndmør, beliggende i Bergens Stift, i Norge*.
Strömbäck, Dag, 1935. *Sejd: Textstudier i nordisk religionshistoria*. Stockholm: Geber.
Strömbäck, Dag, 1975. The concept of the soul in Nordic tradition. *Arv. Nordic Yearbook of Folklore*, 5-23.

Sundt, Eilert, 1858-1859. *Harham. Et eksempel fra fiskeridistrikterne*. Aftryk af Folkevennen 7de og 8de Aargang. Christiana: P.T. Mallings Bogtrykkeri.
Svavarsdóttir, Súsanna, 1997. Fólk á föstudegi. Draumar og goðsagnir á dulmáli. *Morgunblaðið*, 1 August 1997, blaðauki, 6B-7B.
Sveinsdóttir, Jóhanna and Þúriður Jóhannsdóttir, 1992. *Spegill, spegill...* Reykjavík: Mál og Menning.
Swatos, Bill and Loftur Reimur Gissurarson, 1997. *Icelandic Spiritualism*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja, 1990. *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Tapper, Richard L., 1994. Animality, humanity, morality, society. *In:* Tim Ingold, ed. *What is an Animal?* London: Routledge, 47-62.
Tebbenhoff, Edward H., 1985. Tacit rules and hidden family structures: Naming practices and godparentage in Schenectady, New York 1680-1880. *Journal of Social History*, 18 (4), 567-585.
Tedlock, Barbara, 1987. Dreaming and dream research. *In:* Barbara Tedlock, ed. *Dreaming. Anthropological and Psychological Interpretations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-30.
Tómasdóttir, Halla and Frosti Ólafsson, eds., 2007. *Iceland's Advance. Foreign Investment 2001-2006*. Reykjavík: Iceland Chamber of Commerce.
Turner, Victor W., 1967. *The Forest of Symbols. Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. London: Cornell University Press.
Turner, Victor W., 1971. An anthropological approach to the Icelandic Saga. *In:* T.O. Beidelman, ed. *The Translation of Culture. Essays to E. E. Evans-Pritchard*. London: Tavistock, 349-374.
Turville-Petre, Gabriel, 1964. *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
Turville-Petre, Gabriel, 1966. Dream symbols in Old Icelandic literature. *In:* Hg. von Kurt Rudolph, Rolf Heller und Ernst Walter, eds. *Festschrift Walter Baetken*, dargebracht zu seinem 80. Geburtstag am 28. März 1964.Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 343-354.
Turville-Petre, Gabriel, 1967. An Icelandic version of the *Somniale Danielis*. *In:* Allan H. Orrick, ed. *Nordica et Anglica. Studies in Honor of Stefán Einarsson*. The Hague: Mouton, 19-36.
Tylor, Edward. 1891. *Primitive Culture*. London: John Murray, vol. I.
Turville-Petre, Gabriel, 1972. *Nine Norse Studies*. London: University College London, volume V.
Vésteinsson, Orri, 2005. The Formative Phase of the Icelandic Church ca 990-1240 AD. *In*: Helgi Þorláksson, ed. *Church Centres. Church Centres in Iceland from the 11th to the 13th century and their Parallels in other Countries*. Reykholt: Snorrastofa, Cultural and Medieval Centre.
Vitebsky, Piers, 1993. Is Death the Same Everywhere? Contexts of Knowing and Doubting. *In:* Mark Hobart, ed. *An Anthropological Critique of Development. The Growth of Ignorance*. London: Routledge, 100-115.

Vitebsky, Piers, 2005. *Reindeer People. Living with Animals and Spirits in Siberia*. London: Harper Perennial.
Vries, Jan de, 1956. *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, I.
Wagner, Roy, 1986. *Asiwinarong: Ethos, Image and Social Power among the Usen Barok of New Ireland*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Wieland, Darryl, 1989. The Idea of Mystical Power in Iceland. *In:* Gísli Pálsson and E. Paul Durrenberger, eds. *The Anthropology of Iceland*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 19-39.
Whyte, Susan Reynolds, 1997. *Questioning Misfortune. The pragmatics of uncertainty in Eastern Uganda*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Wiker, Gry, 2004. Om endringer i menneskets verdensbilde på 500-tallet. *In:* Lene Melheim, Lotte Heidager, Kristin Oma, eds. *Mellom himmel og jord*. Foredrag af et seminar om religionsarkæologi, 31. januar- 2. februar 2002, Isegran. Oslo Archaeological Series, nr. 2. Oslo: Institutt for Arkeologi, Kunsthistorie og konservering, Universitetet i Oslo, 114-155.
Willerslev, Rane, 2007. *Soul Hunters. Hunting, Animism, and Personhood among the Siberia Yukaghirs*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Willerslev, Rane, 2004. Spirits as 'ready to hand'. A phenomenological analysis of Yukaghir spiritual knowledge and dreaming. *Anthropological Theory*, 4 (4), 395-418.
Williams, Forrest, 1986. Translator's preface. *In:* Keith Hoeller, ed., *Dream and Existence*. New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc, 19-29.
Willis, Roy G., 1992. Afterword. *In:* M.C. Jędrej and Rosalind Shaw, eds. *Dreaming, Religion and Society in Africa*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 177-181.
Wylie, Jonathan, 1987. *The Faroe Islands. Interpretations of History*. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky.
Young, Michael, 1988. *Metronomic Society. Natural Rhythms and Human Timetables*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
Þorsteinsson, Björn and Bergsteinn Jónsson, 1991. *Islands saga til okkar daga*. Reykjavík: Sögufélag.

Primary sources

Old Icelandic literature

Ari Thorgilsson, 1930. *The Book of Icelanders*. Edited and translated by Halldór Hermannsson. Series: Islandica, vol. XX. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Brennu-Njáls saga, 1954. In: *Íslenzk Fornrit*, XII bindi. Einar ÓL. Sveinsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1-489.

Edda Snorra. Nafnaþulur og skáldatal, 1954. Guðni Jónsson, ed. Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan.

Eddukvæði (Sæmundar-edda). Guðni Jónsson, ed. Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1+2, 1954.

Eddukvæði, 1998. Gísli Sigurðsson sá um útgáfuna. Reykjavík: Mál og Menning.

Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar, 1933. In: *Íslenzk Fornrit*, II bindi. Sigurður Nordal gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornrítafélag, 1-300.

Eyrbyggja saga, 1935. *In:* Einar Ólafur Sveinsson og Matthías Þórðarson gáfu út. *Íslenzk Fornrit*, IV bindi. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornrítafélag, 1-184.

Eyrbyggja Saga, 1989. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (trans). London: Penguin Classics.

Gísla saga Súrssonar, 1943. *In: Íslenzk Fornrit.* VI bindi. Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson gáfu út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornrítafélag, 1-118.

Gisli Sursson's saga, 1997. *In:* Viðar Hreinsson, ed. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, translated by Keneva Kunz. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, II, 1-48.

Grettis Saga Ásmundarsonar, 1936. *In: Íslenzk Fornrit*, VII bindi. Guðni Jónsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1-192.

Gunnlaugs saga Ormstungu, 1938. *In: Íslenzk Fornrit*, III bindi. Sigurður Nordal og Guðni Jónsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 49-108.

Harðar saga Grímkelssonar. *In: Íslenzk Fornrit*, XIII bindi. Þórhallur Vilmundarson og Bjarni Vilhjálmsson gáfu út. Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag.

Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings, 1943. *In: Íslenzk Fornrit.* VI. Björn K. Þórólfsson og Guðni Jónsson gafu út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 289-359.

Hjalmters ok Ölvers saga, 1830. *In: Fornaldar Sögur Norðrlanda* eftir gömlum handritum, utgefnar af C. C. Rafn, P. D., Kaupmannahöfn, III, 453-519.

Íslendingabók, 1968. *In*: *Íslenzk Fornrit*, 1 (1+2). Jakob Benediktsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornrítafélag.

Íslendingasaga, 1946. *In:* Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason og Kristján Eldjárn, eds. *Sturlungasaga.* Reykjavík*:* Sturlunguútgáfan, I + II.

Kormak's Saga, 1997. *In:* Viðar Hreinsson, ed. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, translated by Rory McTurk. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, III, 1-221.

Kormáks saga, 1939. *In: Íslenzk Fornrit*, VIII bindi. Einar ÓL. Sveinsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 201-303.
Landnámabók, 1968. *In: Íslenzk Fornrit*, I, 1 + 2. Jakob Benediktsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornrítafélag, 1 (1+2).
Laxdæla saga, 1934. *In: Íslenzk Fornrit*, V bindi. Einar Ól. Sveinsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornrítafélag, 1-249.
Njál's Saga, 1997. *In:* Viðar Hreinsson, ed. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, translated by Katrina C. Attwood. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, III, 1-221.
The Poetic Edda, 1996. Translated with an introduction and notes by Carolyne Larrington. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue, 1997. *In:* Viðar Hreinsson, ed. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, translated by Katrina C. Attwood. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, I, 305-334.
The Saga of Havard of Isafjord, 1997. *In:* Viðar Hreinsson, ed. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, translated by Fredrik J. Heinemann, Vol. V, 311-347.
The Saga of Hjalmther and Olvir, 2006. *In: Icelandic Histories and Romances.* Translated and introduced by Ralph O'Connor, 2006.
The Saga of the People of Laxardal, 1997. *In:* Viðar Hreinsson, ed. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, translated by Keneva Kunz. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, V, 1-119.
The Saga of Thord Menace, 1997. *In:* Viðar Hreinsson, ed. *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, translated by Katrina C. Attwood. Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, III, 361-396.
Snorri Sturluson, 1932. *Heimskringla or the Lives of the Norse Kings*. Edited with notes by Erling Monsen and translated into the English with the assistance of A. H. Smith. Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons LTD.
Sturlungasaga, 1946. Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason og Kristján Eldjárn, eds. Reykjavík: Sturlunguútgáfan, 1+2.
Vatnsdæla saga, 1939. *In: Íslenzk Fornrit*, VIII bindi. Einar ÓL. Sveinsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1-132.
Vápnfirðinga saga, 1950. *In: Íslenzk Fornrit*, XI bindi. Jón Jóhanneson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 23-65.
Viga Glum's Saga, The Story of Viga-Glum, 1866. Translated from the Icelandic with Notes and an Introduction by the Right Honourable Sir Edmund Head, Bart.. KCB. London: Williams and Norgate.
Völsunga saga, 1959. *In: Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*. Guðni Jónsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1, 107-218.
Ynglinga saga, 1946. *In: Heimskringla Snorra Sturlusonar*. Um prentun sá Páll Eggert Ólafsson. Reykjavík: Menntamálaráð og Þjóðvinafélag.
Ynglinga Saga, 1932. *In:* Snorri Sturluson. *Heimskringla or the Lives of the Norse Kings*. Edited with notes by Erling Monsen and translated into the English with the assistance of A. H. Smith. Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons LTD.

Þáttr Ólafs Geirstaða Álfs, 1835. *In: Fornamannasögur* 209-215. Kaupmannahöfn: n.p., 1835
Þórðar saga Hreðu, 1959. *In: Íslenzk Fornrit*, XIV bindi. Jóhannes Halldórsson gaf út. Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornrítafélag, 14, 161-226.
Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar, 1829. *In:* C. C. Rafn, ed. *Fornaldar sögur Norðrlanda: eftir gömlum handritum.* Kaupmannahöfn: (n.p.) 2, 381-459.
Þorsteins þætti Uxafóts, 1991. *In:* Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, eds. *Íslenzk fornrit.* Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornrítafélag, 13, 341-370.

Sources fifteenth – nineteenth century

Draumur Guðrúnar Brandsdóttur. Lbs 412 8vo, Lbs 726 4to, Lbs 738 8vo, Lbs 2294 4to, Lbs 2941 8vo, Lbs 3013 8vo, Lbs 3930 8vo, Lbs 4089 8vo.
Draumur Guðrúnar Brandsdóttur og fáein ljóðmæli, kveðin 1874 – 1882 af Margjeti Sveinsdóttur, þá til heimilis á Grimsstöðum í Meðallandi, en gefin út af Guðmundi Eyjólfssyni. Reykjavík. Prentuð í félagsprentsmiðjunni 1892.
Eggert Ólafsson 1975 [1772]. *Ferðabók Eggert Ólafssonar og Bjarna Pálssonar. Um ferðir þeirra á Íslandi árin 1752-1757.* Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Örn og Örlygur hf.
Jarðabók Árna Magnússonar og Páll Vídalins 1702-1712 (1913-1943). Copenhagen: Hinu íslenska fræðafélagi í Kaupmannahöfn
Jónsson, Arngrímur, 1985 [1609]. *Crymogæa. Þættir úr sögu Íslands*. Jakob Benediktsson þýddi og samdi inngang og skýringar; Helgi Þorláksson sá um útgáfuna. Reykjavík: Sögufélagið.
Kennimark kölska (Character bestiæ), 1976. Lýður Björnsson sá um útgáfuna. Útgefandi: Ísafoldarprestsmiðja HF.
Oddur Einarsson, 1971. *Íslands lýsing. Qualiscunque descriptio Islandiae.* Reykjavík: Menningarsjóður.
Sjóðurinn. Samansafn af ýmsum fróðlegum og markverðum ritum, tilburðum og áríðandi vísindum gömlum skræðum á Höfða í Dýrafirði 1879-1887. Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur, Lbs 2294 4to.
Sýnisbók íslenzkra rímna. Frá upphafi rímnakveðskapar til loka nítjandu aldar, 1952. Valið hefur Sir William Craigie. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD.
Vitran og Draumur séra Jóns Magnússonar, 1627. ÍB 161 8vo 1845-1853.
Vitran séra Magnúsar Péturssonar á Hörgslandi, 1628. JS 36 4to 1798.

Collections of folktales

Færøske folkesagn og æventyr, 1898-1901. Jakob Jakobsen, ed. Copenhagen: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel norsk litteratur. Republished in 3. vols., 1964-1972, Tórshavn: H.N. Jacobsens Bókahandil.

Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og sagnir, 1922-1925. Safnað og skráð hefur Sigfús Sigfússon. Seyðisfirði.

Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýri, 1954-1961. Safnað hefur Jón Árnason. Reykjavík: Þjóðsaga, I-VI.

Abbreviations

AM refers to manuscripts of the Árni Magnússon Institute (*Stofnun Árna Magnússonar*) in Reykjavík.

ÍB refers to the collection from the Icelandic Literary Society (*Hið Íslenska bókmenntafélag*) of the society's Copenhagen section

ÍBR indicates those of the Reykjavík section.

Lbs *(Landsbókasafni)* refers to the manuscript collection of the National and University Library of Iceland.

JS refers to the Jón Sigurðsson Collection purchased by the National and University Library in 1879.

Sám refers to the ethnological collection of the Árni Magnússon Institute (*Stofnun Árna Magnússonar*) in Reykjavík.

ÞÞ refers to the numbering of the responses to the questionnaires sent out by the Ethnological Department of the National Museum of Iceland (*Þjóðminjasafnið*).

Other references

In his book, data is used from the following questionnaires sent out by The National Museum of Iceland *(Þjóðminjasafnið).*

No. 4 *Andlát og útfararsiðir* (Dead and burial practices) sent out in February 1961

No. 10 *Barnið, fæðing og fyrsta ár* (The child, birth and the first year) sent out in October 1963;

No. 19 *Sumardagurinn fyrsta* (The first day of summer) sent out in April 1969;

No. 32 *Veður og veðurspá* (Weather and weather predictions) sent out in October 1975;

No. 37 *Háttumál, svefnhættir og fótaferð* (Going to bed, sleeping practices and waking up) sent out in May-June 1978;

No. 61 *Draumar, fyrirburðir, spádómar* (Dreams, phenomena and prophecies), sent out in March 1985.

No. 89 *Náttúruhamfarir* (Natural catastrophes) sent out in February 1996.

Index

að vitja nafns, see also namesake, naming;183;184;185; 186;191; 193;194;196;197;235
ancestor;166;199;251
animal: animal form;67;89;94; 106;115;195
Annales School;39
anxiety;177;202;203;209
Aristotle;43;265
atsiaq;197
awareness;20;146;207
Baldurs draumar;59;64
baptism;65;170;186;187
beliefs and practices;18;229;233
berdreymi;18;57;226;227;239;244
Bergson, Henri;20;219;265;266
Binswanger, Ludwig;135;160;266
body;37;46;47;54;58;66;67;68;70; 73;74;79;94;96;97;110;131; 132;135;167;168;178;211;218; 220;243;244;245;249;254;261; 262
Christianity;21;24;26;64;65;67; 69;70;79;87;90;96;131;132;16 5;166;179;224;225;229;232;25 3;255; 257;259
classification;118;120;122;124;12 5;126;157;199
cognition;18;20;50;54;136;137;21 7
colour;81;99;100;123;124;125;21 6; 239;241;246
community;33;122;194;197;245
consciousness;20;55;130;195; 216;217;218;219;222;252;254; 264; 265;269;278
cosmology;23;24;39;41;47;53;54; 55;58;87;89;129;130;131;132; 162;166;167;179;191;194;195; 198;204;213;214;218;223;227; 235;237;246;254;255;257;258; 259; 260;261;262;263;264;278
creativity;23;40;54;213;261;262
crisis;28;86;203
death;27;45;51;58;64;66;70;71; 74;79;92;96;97;99;104;105; 113;118;125;126;127;129;130; 132;142;155;156;167;171;174; 175;177;179;183;188;194;196; 197;198;203;211;215;220;224; 228;233;242;243;249;250;276; relationships with the dead; 18;23;30;39;40;45;51;61;67; 69;71;77;85;86;87;94;97;103; 108;109;110;111;112;113;114; 115;117;125;126;130;133;149; 150;152;153;165;166;167;168; 169;170;171;172;173;174;175; 176;177;178;179;180;181;183; 184;185;186;188;190;191;192; 193;194;195;196;197;198;199; 216;218;220;221;222;224;225; 228;231;232;233;235;236;237; 242;243;246;247;249;254;257; 258;260;261; 262;263;264;271
Descartes;44; Cartesian philosophy;21
draumkona (dream woman);183
dream consciousness;20
dream specialist;37
dream symbolism: dream symbols;29;36;37;71;89;117; 119;126;202;243;244;250;252; 254;262
dreamer;11;18;19;20;21;22;33;37; 38;40;44;50;52;61;68;71;72;82 ;83;90;97;98;100;104;106;107; 118;120;123;126;128;130;135; 136;137;145;146;172;173;174; 177;178;184;185;193;194;201; 202;203;204;206;209;211;212; 217;218;219;221;227;236;242; 243;246;247;248;249;250;252; 253

dreams, dreaming: and natural disasters;27;36;82;86;249;259; anthropological theory of; 21;50;51;203; as cultural messages;48; as premonitions; 36;71;98;106; as revelation; 83; 226;254; interpretation of;11;15;35;37;38;40;89;100; 123;124;129;170;211;240;241; 243;249;250;251;252;253;255; 261;262;263; narration of;22;37;38;48;71;72; 75;78;202; revelatory power of;11;18;43;67;73;130;225; 226; 228;239;241;247;263; sexual meaning of;47;203;250; sharing of;12;23;29;30;32;33; 36;38;39;40;48;51;53;54;55;57 ;74;84;89;129;130;160;213; 226;227;228;229;235;239;242; 243;245;246;247;250;251;252; 254;260;261;262;263;264;272; social theory of;24; 38;52;53
Eddukvæði;59;60;62;63;64;73;91; 104;125;133;166;282
emotion;20;137;146;197;202;203
exchange;75;84;137;142;146;147; 148;149;150;151;161;181;194; 236;261
fantasy;44;69;272
Faroe Islands;24;43;150;151
fate;58;59;63;64;69;71;82;87;92; 97;104;106;107;199;211
folk tale;106;112;138;142;146; 147;149;160;161;167;169;170; 217;218;228;229;230;231
Freud, Sigmund;21;22;44;46;47; 48;50;69;136;204;219;248; 254;268
fylgja;65;89;90;91;92;93;94;96; 97;98;100;102;104;105;106; 107;108;109;110;111;112;113; 114;115;117;121;125;129;130; 131;132; 178;195;257
God;21;44;76;79;81;82;86;132;13 9;140;141;178;179;221;229;23 2; 236;237;254;256;258;264
grammar;15;19;187
Greenland;24;27;91;196;197;199; 273;276
Helgi Pjeturss;215;216;217;218; 219;220;221;222;229;232;257; 264
hidden people (*huldufólk*);39;40; 83; 84;85;86;87;133;137;138;140; 141;142;144;145;146;147;148; 149 ;150;151;152;153;154;155;156 ; 157;158;159;160;161;162;163; 172;173;184;214;218;221;222; 224;229;230;231;241
hinum megin;173;174;177;180; 181;221;243
history;12;21;32;39;45;55;57;58; 69;72;84;86;87;150;157;167; 198;199;257;259
Hrunamannahreppur;12;28;32;34; 68;89;110;117;118;126;127; 138;152;153;156;179;182;190; 198;223; 224;260
hugir;94;95;97
humor;17;73;166;220;239
Icelandic sagas;69;70;71;72;73; 74;82;93;95;96;98;107;145; 177;187;239;248
ideae adventiciae;20
illness;52;105;126;127;130;142; 154;155;176;186;232;249
illusion;46
imagery;258
imagination;21;45;48;49;51;54; 214;264;268;274
irrational experience;44
Jung, Carl;21;22;44;46;202;248; 252;273
kinship;187;191;196; lineage;198

linguistic;19;22;53;130;172;173
loneliness;21;50;52;167;205;208;209;210;218;254
modernity;23;86;161;165;166;229
mourning;84;86;103;177;178;197;224;235
name;17;66;76;82;84;109;116;120;122;159;167;168;169;170;174;176;180;182;183;184;185;186;187;188;190;191;192;193;194;195;196;197;198;224;233;235; 238;242
namesake;170;182;184;186
naming;15;24;109;116;118;165;170;171;181;182;184;185;186;187;188;190;191;192;194;195;196;197
narration;17;46;47;48;49;50;51;52;58;70;86;87;121;122;129;155;201;207;212;242;252
network;22;187;191;197
newborn;90;146;165;169;182;183;190;194;196;197
nightmare;36;178
Norway;24;26;71;92;94;113;121;150;169;270;276
Óðinn;59;60;61;62;63;67;75;76;78;89;125;132;166
omen;65;250
perception;20;37;49;86;115;116;119;135;136;146;216;219
personhood;23;40;46;52;96;129;166;195;198;212;
identity;32;40;51;55;57;71;137;146;151;161;176;199;202;206;207;211;262;263;
person;19;23;31;35;38;41;43;50;52;62;85;86;90;93;95;96;97;106;107;108;110;111;112;113;114;115;117;118;121;122;125;126;128;129;130;132;136;144;147;155;157;165;167;168;169;170;172;173;176;177;178;179;181;183;184;186;187;191;193;194;195;196;197;198;199;204;205;206;209;211;214;216;217;218;220;224;235;241;243;247;249;250;251;258;260;262;
self;11;18;19;32;37;40;44;49;51;52;53;97;111;122;138;147;150;151;161;166;171;199;201;202;203;204;207;239;247;248;250;251;252;253;255;258;259;262;268;274; technologies of the self;53
poetry;27;59;69;78;79;85;270
power;18;19;26;27;28;39;47;48;50;53;85;97;98;119;121;122;137;142;146;150;151;170;179;193;240;244;253;256;260;262;263
pregnancy;35;84;103;165;169;171;183;184;185;186;193;194;196; 198;208;209;218;243;244
psychoanalysis;22;45;202;
psychoanalytical perspective;37;220
psychology: psychological processes;45
rationality;85;86
reality;43;44;46;49;50;53;57;58;85;123;129;131;136;137;138;145;203;217;219;232;239;245;255;262;272
rebirth;62;165;169;194;195;196;199
Reformation;26;79;82;179
relative;111;152;184;188;193;194;195;197;199;227;229
remembrance;198;214;217;
minning;198; reflection;40;61;198;259
Rímur;74
science: scientific;24;44;86;116;179;216;225;229;233;236;239;240;241;245;246;247
shamanism: shamanistic practice;66;67;176

Skíðaríma;72;74;86;272
sleep;17;21;36;49;50;61;66;68; 75;77;78;82;94;95;100;102; 106;135;136;137;138;139;144; 160;216; 218;223;226;229;272
sleepy;68;92;93;110
Somniale Danielis;44;280
sorrow;199
soul;23;45;46;58;66;67;68;77;79; 81;89;90;96;97;129;130;135; 158;195;196;211;218;220;226; 235;239;248;249;254;265;280; multiple souls;132;195;196
spirit;45;62;63;89;91;94;95;96; 97;99;110;112;113;114;115; 117;126;157;158;165;166;169; 170;171; 195;196;203;247
spiritualism;175;179;216;224; 225;229;231;247
symbolism;22;34;47;123;248;249
time;11;15;17;18;19;23;24;26;27; 28;29;30;32;33;34;35;36;37;39 ;41;44;45;53;55;58;61;62;68; 69;70;73;74;76;78;80;83;84;87 ;89;90;91;96;97;102;103;104; 107;108;114;116;118;119;120; 121;123;124;126;127;130;132; 133;135;136;138;139;140;144; 146;147;148;149;150;153;156; 166;170;172;175;177;178;181; 182;183;185;191;193;194;196; 198;199;204;205;206;207;208; 209;210;211;218;219;225;226; 227;230;232;233;234;239;240; 242;243;245;251;253;257;258; 261;263; temporal boundaries; 18;61;68;78;83;86;87;91;97; 109;114;129;130;132;162;197; 199;213;215;219; 247;252;254
transcendental phenomena;18;85
vision;18;53;64;68;69;82;83;86; 141;237
Völuspá;59;62;64
waking;11;17;18;19;20;21;22;30; 32;34;36;37;39;40;43;45;46; 49;50;51;52;53;61;68;72;77;79 ;81;82;84;86;91;95;106;108; 110;111;117;118;123;126;127; 129;130;136;137;138;140;142; 146;147;152;155;160;162;163; 170;172;173;179;180;181;183; 202;204;205;206;207;208;209; 210;211;212;213;215;216;217; 219;220;222;230;234;236;237; 239;241;242;243;244;245;246; 254;260;285
weather;34;117;127;285
wish;12;28;32;94;116;138;139; 165;168;170;171;183;185;187; 193; 195;196;202;204